

**Identity and Violence: An Enquiry into the Relationship between the
Manipuri Muslims (Meitei Pangals) and the Meiteis**

Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
In partial fulfillment for the award of the Degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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2017**



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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled “Identity and Violence: An Enquiry into the Relationship between the Manipuri Muslims (Meitei-Pangals) and the Meiteis”, submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, at Jawaharlal Nehru University, is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree, either at this University or anywhere else.

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CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Tanweer Fazal who patiently guided and encouraged me throughout the writing of this dissertation. He offered valuable comments, suggestions and provided me with insights of how to go about in approaching the theme. This dissertation has been successful because of his help, concern and motivation.

I thank the University Grants Commission for providing me the UGC Fellowship, which gave me essential funds to work on my research.

I am thankful to Dr. Bimol Akoijam for providing me useful inputs in shaping the direction of this research. My heartfelt thanks also to Dr. Lam Khan Piang for the encouragements and useful thoughts shared at the beginning of my research. Thanks to Md. Abul Kalam, Deputy Director, Manipur Archives; Md. Rashid and S.M Sheikh, for the immense amount of materials shared to me and for your encouragements. Special thanks to Indrani, for providing me mental strength and support throughout the work. Thanks to all my friends in JNU for all the discussions, feedbacks and productive time spent in the canteens and lawns.

Finally, I am thankful to my family for all the supports and encouragements at all times.

Pusham Azad Babu

July 2017

Dedicated to
Ema (peace be upon her)

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Introduction

A big challenge that human society faces today is the task of understanding and interpretation of the different phenomena that our society encounters. In the quest of knowledge production and reproduction, humanity has evolved in various forms of approach and techniques in order to unravel the intricacies associated with phenomena. Various forms of research are associated in this project of knowledge production through the employment of varieties of approaches, methodologies, techniques and methods. Research not only gives a reflection of opinions and prejudices but also substantiates, refutes, organizes or generates our thinking and produce evidence that may challenge not only of our own beliefs, but also those of groups and societies in general (May, 1998, p. 8). Different schools of thought such as positivism, empiricism and realism deals with the ways in which our environment and its underlying structures, structure us or create our understandings. Collection of empirical data helps to test, generate or interact with the proportions of social sciences. However a lot of phenomena in the social world cannot be understood with these set of approaches. So in the realm of subjective states and the inner world of experiences, certain sets of approach are required where we measure the meanings that people give to the environment. This process requires hermeneutics principle in order to unravel the inter-subjectivities in the phenomenon.

This research is a noble approach to enquire and understand the growth of incidences of violence between the Meitei and Meitei-Pangal communities of Manipur, in the last four decades. The study aims at deciphering the relationships between identity and violence, by examining the processes of change in ethnic identities and boundary relations happening amongst the various communities in the state, particularly between the two communities mentioned above. By observing certain variables of enquiry such as identity, conflict, power, religion etc. across various locations in history; the study delves to find patterns in the social and political changes taking place, and an effort has been made to extract meanings by linking them with incidences of violence in contemporary times. Most of the conflicts in the northeast have been studied and analyzed from ethnic assertion frame.

However this study is different because it incorporates enquiries in religious dimension of conflict and social interactions amongst ethnic communities.

A brief History of the Growth of Conflicts and Violence in Manipur

Ethnocentric struggles, conflicts and assertions for identity have been part of the socio-political changes in the lives of native communities of Northeast India in the last few decades. The rise of ethno-nationalism and conflicts in the Northeastern part of India, which includes Manipur, can be understood with different interpretations based on different contexts.¹ Reasons of ethnic conflicts range from ‘clash of civilization’ to fight for natural resources, religion and spatial dependence (Nguyen, 2010).² Different types of ethnic assertions in the Northeast India have a historical baggage of conflicts and problems conceived during the pre colonial and colonial times. Looking at the global trend, ethno-nationalism has been of large, violent in nature. An implicit promotion of the sense of identification and explicit demonstration in taking pride of one’s tradition and institutions forms the anchor of identity mobilisation. This mobilisation based on indigenous entities has become a prominent feature of ethno- nationalism and identity assertion in Northeast India. The type of conflicts are not essentially violent in nature, however there are conflicts of positive developmental potential, as much as conflicts are misunderstood with a notion of negative-destructive connotations.³ Example of conflicts with negative-destructive connotations includes conflicts associated with land acquisition and Maoist Movement (Fernandes & Borgohain, 2017, p. 47, quoting Jairam Ramesh’s observation). “Most movements in the Northeast began with peaceful demands but turned violent when the state did not pay attention to them (ibid, pp. 16-17, p. 47). However majority of conflicts in present day Northeast India are direct consequences of the British colonial occupation and are remnants of their various administrative and political interventions into the social and political life of indigenous people of the area. Many conflicts are associated with political

¹ Phanjoubam, Pradip. (2016). *The Northeast questions: conflicts and frontiers*. New Delhi: Routledge Publications

² Nguyen, Mai. (Creighton University, 2010) as cited in Fernandes, Walter & Borgohain, Bhaswati. (2017) *Journals of dispute: Media coverage of conflicts in the Northeast*. Guwahati: (North Eastern Social Research Centre [NESRC]). p. 51.

³ Fernandes, Walter & Borgohain, Bhaswati. (2017). *Journals of dispute: Media coverage of conflicts in the Northeast*. Guwahati: (North Eastern Social Research Centre [NESRC]). P. 46-47.

assertions and demand for recognition of unrecognized nationalities and smaller identities. Also there are insurgency movements against the idea of becoming a part of India.

Driven by the idea of the right to self-determination, these insurgent movements have taken to agitation, including political extremism and secessionist movements. Many unlawful rebel organisations which are active in states like Manipur, Nagaland and Assam have been fighting for a cause of separating from the Union of India and restoration of their lost sovereignty. The struggle for the formation of a greater 'Nagalim', by the multiple factions of NSCN (National Socialist Council of Nagaland) is one of such movement. There are multiple numbers of such organisations in Manipur which are struggling, either for a sovereign Manipur or as armed groups operating for the interest of protecting their own ethnic group and/or associated sub-ethnic groups. In Manipur, valley-based organisations like UNLF (United National Liberation Front), KYKL (Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup), PREPAK (People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak) are fighting for a sovereign Manipur, a drive opposing the status of Merger Agreement signed between the then King of Manipur Maharaja Bodhachandra with the Union of India on October 15, 1949. Hence their main objective is to bring back the pre-merger status to Manipur. Different other similar organisations are actively functioning with similar objectives of demanding the right to self determination.⁴

While major hill based organisations from the Kuki and Naga tribes have claims for either separate territories or separate administrative arrangement, of late these organisations have increasingly indulged in ethnic politics and conflicts, caused by conflicting and overlapping claims over territories.⁵ Conflicts and armed struggles among the hill tribes have a characteristic feature where the major tribes like *Tankhul* and *Thodou* exert hegemonic influences upon the smaller and insignificant tribes, in order to bring them to their fold. This is being viewed as a political move to expand their influence and control over territories, besides the question of consolidation of ethnic identity.⁶ In 1992-1994, there was a Naga-

⁴ Sanajaoba, Dr. Naorem. (1988). *The genesis of insurgency in Manipur past and present: The heritage and ordeals of a civilization.* (ed.) p. 245-290.

⁵ Piang, L.Lam Khan. (2015). Overlapping territorial claims and ethnic conflict in Manipur. *South Asia Research*, Vol. 35(2): 158-176. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

⁶ *ibid.* Piang . 158-176; Singh, Mangi. (2009). Understanding conflict: An insight into the factors responsible for the Kuki Naga clashes in Manipur during the 1990s. *Indian Journal of Political Science*. Vol. LXX. No. 2.

Kuki armed conflict over conflicting claims on ownership of lands.⁷ However Siamkhum (2014) maintains that the cause of the Naga Kuki armed conflict in 1992-94, which led to the death of several hundred people was a result of,

The existence of numerous ethnic based armed outfits as protagonists of such claims and counter claims; extortion of home land taxes; of quit notices served by one group to another; fight for control over resources; disagreements on sharing of development funds; inefficient administration; lack of effective law and order machinery; poor governance.

The recent development of ethnic assertions from the Naga tribes has been for separate administrative arrangement outside the purview of the Government of Manipur. There have been persistent demands for integration of the Naga dominated districts of Manipur with Nagaland by NSCN (IM) and demand have also been made for an alternative arrangement (AA) by United Naga Council (UNC), which is the apex decision making body of the Nagas of Manipur.⁸ This move has become a cause of apprehension to the valley dwelling people, basically the Meiteis, of a possible territorial fragmentation. Violent protests have happened against a move by the government of India to extend the ceasefire with NSCN-IM, beyond the territorial boundary of Nagaland. These protests and movements to protect the territorial integrity of Manipur were being spearheaded by various organisations including United Clubs of Manipur (UCM).⁹ The burning down of Manipur State Legislative Assembly building by violent mobs on June 18, 2001 and the killing of 18 protestors in police firing have become the significant markers of the movement. Moreover the frequent use of indefinite highway bandh and economic blockade by the frontal Naga organizations and counter blockade by valley based organizations as tools of protest and demands have become a characteristic feature of this ongoing conflict between the hills and valley. These antagonistic struggles have induced the social distance between the people of the hills and valley to become increasingly distant.

April-June, 2009.; Oinam, Bhagat. (2003). Patterns of ethnic conflict in Manipur in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 38 No. 21 (May 24-30, 2003) pp. 2031-2037

⁷ *ibid.*, p.171.

⁸ Siamkhum, Dr. Th. (2014). Ethnic conflicts in Manipur: Cause and prospects for Resolution. *IJMSS* Vol. 2 Issue-11, Impact Factor 3.259 p. 219-220

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 220.

Besides these organisations whose main objectives are political in nature, there have been a mushrooming of several socio-religious and cultural organisations during the 20th century, especially in the second half, which are mainly associated with religious and cultural reformation and revivalism respectively. Manipur's experience with ethno-religious and cultural assertions have been a mix of violent and passive struggles. Caught in a flux of waves of globalisation, socio-cultural and religious invasions, which have swept across Manipur, from the pre-colonial period, colonial to the present day, the natural inhabitants of the state, have been thrown into an apprehension of being reaped of their endemic culture, limited natural resources and opportunities in life. Two similar social processes related to identity assertions are seen among the Meitei and Meitei Pangal community respectively. Both communities have faced different kinds of impacts in their culture, religion and other spheres at different times in history. Influenced by different forms of consciousness, these communities had their process of assertions started at different times. The Meiteis have been actively pursuing for a reformation in their religious and cultural practices, and also have been seeking for a revival of their traditional Sanamahi religion. On the other hand, the Pangals have asserted politically for recognition of their identity as unique, and continues to assert actively in both political and cultural arenas. The reformist and revivalist movements in the Meitei society under Sanamahism had its conception in 1888 at Cachar in Assam.¹⁰ Started with the organisation Apokpa Marup, many other organisations, including Meitei Marup, Meitei National Front (MNF) also function under the umbrella of Sanamahism Movement. Started as a passive movement with an objective to revive and save the traditional Meitei religion and culture from the wave of Brahmanical Hindu religion which had transformed the Meitei society in the last three centuries; a new wave emerged in the Sanamahi Movement during 1975 to 1980, organised and launched by educated Meitei Youths. It was spearheaded by MNF and it took a radical move of taking over traditional *lais* (deities) and *laiphams* (abode of deities), by force.¹¹ The Meiteis under this movement had taken a fundamental move of emphasizing their in-group identity through 'isolation' and

¹⁰ Nilabir, Sairem. (Eds.) (1991). The revivalist movement of Sanamahism in *Manipur past and present, the ordeals and heritage of a civilization*, Vol. II (Philosophy, Culture and Literature). New Delhi: Mittal Publications

¹¹ Ibid. p. 119

‘nativism’.¹² This turn can be considered as a defining moment for inquiring into certain traits of conflicts. On the other hand, the Pangal society after the violent Meitei-Pangal riot of 1993, has taken up distinct forms of fundamentalist traits and explicit dispositions of islamization. This serves as another turning point in defining the relationship between the two communities.

Another important active movement that has emerged out of apprehensions among the native people, of being outnumbered by outsiders because of unabated entry into the state, is the ILP (Inner Line Permit) Movement, which has gained momentum in the last decade. The common characters of all the major movements and conflicts in Manipur are their connectedness with the issue of identity and apprehensions over resources. Many of these ethnic assertions and movements are characterised by their approach for politics of recognition and redistribution. Relatively left out in the development, the Manipuri Muslims (Meitei-Pangals), who are weaker in all socio-economic parameters have aggressively asserted for their identity, recognition and to ensure proper redistribution for a reasonable share in socio-economic and cultural participations. These assertions are often marked with conflicts of interests with the other communities.

Meitei-Pangal Relationships, Conflicts and Violence

In the last four decades in Manipur, there have been unprecedented sprouts of ethnic violence between various communities settled in the state. Driven by variety of factors the animosity between the various communities seems to be firmly rooted. One peculiar feature of the continuing trend is the implicit nature of taking a communal turn. Apart from the violence among the hill tribes, there has been a deep sense of animosity among the people of the hills and the valley regions. However the most peculiar of these is that of the increasing violence and confrontation among the two major ethnic communities of the valley area, the Meiteis and the Muslims (Pangals or Meitei-Pangals). As an irony to the long history of peaceful co-existence between these communities, the recent decades have been dotted by an unprecedented surge in violent confrontations leading to a gradual decay of social

¹² Singh, Khuraijam Bijoykumar. (2016). Religious revivalism and colonial rule: Origin of the Sanamahi Movement in Noni, Arambam, & Sanatomba Kangujam (Eds) *Colonialism and resistance: Society and state in Manipur*. New York: Routledge Publications. p. 88

cohesion between the two communities. This transformation has of late become a center of attention for scholarly study. Thus it has become an imperative to study the dynamics of the Muslim society of Manipur and its relations with the Meitei society.

The changing dimension in its socio-cultural, religious and political arenas require critical enquiry with respect to the evolving nature of developments across many entities around. Looking from the conflicts and violence between the various communities, especially between the Meitei Pangal and the Meitei community over the years, certain trends can be seen which can be enquired with the help of appropriate social theories, so that a meaningful understanding of the phenomena can be derived. The changing socio-economic and political conditions have increased the consciousness of a distinct Pangal identity among the Muslims, ethicizing through political assertions, seeking routes of legitimation, inference and recognition.

Against this backdrop, two different trends can be studied: one by way of enquiring the developments that has happened in the Pangal's socio-cultural sphere in the last few decades, and the other in the way the community has received in response, particularly after the riot of May, 3, 1993. Some clear problems can be noticed in the mannerisms whereby increasing waves of homogenization and hegemony play a huge role in forming clear cut enclaves between various ethnic communities. An enquiry can be made on whether increasing push for consolidation of identity leads to reifications of boundaries and relations leading to violence or vice versa. It is worth questioning whether the Pangals are facing difficulty to sustain local truths as an impact of islamization or whether dwindling of syncretic traits and sharpening of identities are related to the present conflicts. The Pangals becoming politically conscious ethnic community might have given them leverage in various spheres; whereas the society of the Meiteis has had several socio-cultural ramifications and political developments in the last couple of decades.

At this critical juncture, it needs to be questioned as to how these developments might have a linkage with the process of otherisation, conflicts and violence. The unfortunate violence of May 3, 1993 had sparked the ignition of a series of communal flare between the two communities. The recent incidents of communal frenzy and mob violence against the

Muslims in particular and other developments of ethnic revivalism and uprisings in Manipur have given a critical dimension to study the phenomena in a systematic way. The conceptual categories of identity, violence, religion, culture and power can be critically enquired in relation to ethnic relations and associated violence. Whereas the study includes micro analysis of the conditions leading to weathering of ethnic boundaries, breaking down of fluidic identity, shared spaces and co-existence and their relationship with violence; the basic enquiry revolves around finding the core relationship between identity and violence.

Theoretical and Conceptual Background

Studying history and historical analysis of the past helps us in understanding phenomena in the social world in which we live in, and to understand the pattern of changes taking place in present times. Analyses of the facts that existed in the past help us to capture the relationships that historical influences have on present social phenomena. The enquiry of what historical events and contingencies allow for a change in the present time and to observe the nature of trajectory that these changes bring about in further societal developments remains a key area in historical sociology.¹³ From the various waves of approaches to study sociological phenomena through meanings derived from historical studies, one important tradition that links the exploration of political-economic condition of the past and their relations to the present social condition, had emerged during the days of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber etc.

However the recent waves have increasingly looked into dimension of power bases in modern democracy, value conflicts etc. The necessity of giving a correct account of the origin and development of social phenomena happening in the current world, drives us to look at different locations, including the social institutions, structures, forms of interactions, political movements etc. A historical approach with dimensions to analyze the economic and material world vis-à-vis the changing social and political order is relevant to this study. The existence of inequalities, relative backwardness and a zero-sum relationship between entities has been the order of contemporary world. In this scenario, competition, strain and conflict constitute the order of the society. A historical approach provides a useful way to examine

¹³ Lachman, Richard. Reviewed Work(s)(2014): What is historical sociology?, *Contemporary Sociology*, Vol. 43, No. 6, 876-877

the changes that have occurred and which are deemed to occur. This helps not only to understand the present by linking with the past but also provide enough understanding of a trend of changes that could follow.¹⁴

Though ethnic violence associated with identity cannot be studied in totality with a single theory and approach, a myriad of connected and related theories and approaches have to be used in an attempt to decipher the nature and contents of violence and understand the phenomena in totality. However based on the nature of the context, and for reasons pertaining to methodological and technical fitness, some specific interrelated theories have been given preference in this study. Studies of ethnic conflict have recently attended the dynamics of violence and the dynamics of ethnicisation.¹⁵ Brubaker and Laitin (Ibid, 1998), have categorized the various methodological approaches to ethnic conflict and violence studies as:

(a) Inductive work at various levels of aggregation seeks to identify the patterns, mechanisms, and recurrent processes implicated in ethnic violence.

(b) Theory-driven work employs models of rational action drawn from international relations theory, game theory, and general rational action theory.

(c) Culturalist work highlights the discursive, symbolic, and ritualistic aspects of ethnic violence.”

While the debates between primordialist and constructivist model of approaches forms the basis of most ethnic conflict and violence studies, instrumental explanations remains one major tool particularly in contemporary developing societies. However the cognitive turns in methodological approach has given a new dimension of enquiry were it promises to recast the position of both primordialist and constructivist approaches as well as show complementariness of each other rather than exclusiveness (Brubaker, Stamatov & Lovemen, 2004, pp. 49-50).

¹⁴ Turner, Bryan. S. (23rd March, 2000). Historical sociology
URL. <http://uregina.ca/~gingrich/m2100.htm> , website visited on 21/7/2017

¹⁵ Brubaker, Rogers & Laitin, D. David. (1998). Ethnic and Nationalist Violence. *Annual Sociological Review*, Vol. 24, 423-452

While different sub-topics in the work have used different theoretical approaches, the overall thesis inclines towards cognitive and evolutionary psychological theoretical approach and their associated and related approaches. Based on the theoretical module of relative deprivation and politics of recognition and redistribution, new theoretical approaches of recognition and misrecognition given by Nancy Fraser¹⁶ has been used to explain intricacies of understanding the political and symbolic processes of identification and recognition, with reference to the conflict between the Meitei and the Meitei-Pangals. The explanation of identity of the Pangals have been made using a canvas of social constructionist tradition which has of late become the most reliable tool to explain complex ethnic relations, and problems of the kind in Manipur. This approach to this theory has more psychological character, and cognitive mechanism proposed by Brubaker and Loveman finds better fit in this locale.

Statement of Problem:

The basic quest for doing this research is to understand the different trajectories of conflicts and associated violence, concerning the relationships between the Manipuri Muslims (Meitei Pangals) and the Meiteis. With a variety of methodologies and ways of studying ethnic conflicts and violence, it is given that “too much social scientific works in this domain (as in others) involves a highly aggregated explananda, as if ethnic violence were a homogeneous substance varying only in magnitude.”¹⁷ Theoretical traditions on ethnic studies, identity formation and ethnic relations have this persistent yet unavoidable dialogue between primordial and instrumentalist approach. Given the kind of new developments in theoretical discourses concerning identity construction, boundary management and collective violence, a grey area always emerge in the conventional approaches of study and a satisfactory explanation is always far from being achieved. In this capacity of theoretical understanding, this research delves for understanding the lacunae and frontiers in studying the conflict and violence patterns between Meiteis and Meitei Pangals, which has of late erupted at a time of ethnic consolidation and reification of identity through many social, political and cultural movements in both the Pangal as well as Meitei society.

¹⁶ Fraser, Nancy. (May-June 2000). Rethinking recognition. *New Left Review* -3

¹⁷ Op.-cit. Brubaker, Rogers & Laitin, D. David. 1998. Pp. 446

Research Questions:

Q1. Is it identity that evokes violence or is it a pattern of violence that impels identities to crave for a difference?

Q2. How do we make sense of the relationship between the positive dimensions of ethnic assertions and reification of identities?

Q3. How do we make sense, using the existing theories of ethnic boundary management, of the trend of reification and objectification of group boundaries that has emerged in the light of identity consciousness among ethnic groups in Manipur?

Research Objectives

This dissertation primarily aims at finding the relationships between identity and violence. In this endeavor a recourse is made in finding the conflict in the violence and a deductive enquiry is made to find if any traits of identify of a group or a community evokes violence over other social entities, and also to make out if a pattern of violence that happens over a period of time induces the groups or identities to look for differences? In this task, an endeavor is made to understand on how consciousness on ethnic identity and assertion evolves amongst various communities of Manipur, particularly the Muslim and Meitei community. An understanding is sought from these explanations, of the processes of assertions on how and in what contexts of identity assertions do ethnic consolidations and reifications happen. The purpose of considering the relationships between the Muslim and Meitei community is because of the close proximity they share in terms of social and physical space.

Methodology

The method used in this thesis is a qualitative analysis based on deductive and interpretative techniques. Both primary as well as secondary sources have been used in the research. The primary sources include some original historical manuscripts (*puyas*) of the Manipuri Muslim community and some official documents including the Census Data, Report on Socio-Economic Survey of the Meitei-Pangals (Manipuri Muslims), Report on Group Clash Inquiry Commission(Manipur, 1993) etc. Secondary sources include various existing

literatures on the topic and theme, which includes books, articles, unpublished dissertations and thesis. Secondary data have not only been sourced from the works of sociologists, but also historians, anthropologists and political scientists who have done significant works on the related topic. Archival sources in the form of newspapers have been relied upon for information of some old violent incidents. Moreover sources from the internet have been used to certain extent, to drive information from e-journals such as EPW, Jstore, and certain other news portals and websites. Because of the sheer absence of literatures based on sociological explanations on conflicts between the Meitei and Pangals, an attempt has been made to bring together some possible techniques, outside the assigned parameters of using secondary data for Mphil work, in this research. Few research work available deals with identity and social formation which are either derived from historical manuscripts or empirical research works, approached from different epistemological foundations. Hence some unavoidable interviews of selective people and telephonic interviews of few personalities have been incorporated as per the approval of my supervisor. Moreover an attempt has also been made to make a deductive analysis based on the collected data from the select interviews, and from personal observations and understandings of the phenomena of conflict that faces the Pangal society.

The approach to this research has been made keeping in mind the appropriate epistemological assumptions that provides the scope, extent and foundation of knowledge for this particular context of study. This is done by keeping in mind the essence of the craft of knowledge production and reproduction, and to make sure a well balanced enquiry is made. The study consists of an exploration into the various theoretical traditions, debates and narratives on identity formation, ethnic relations and collective violence. This includes exploring the different historical and empirical facts related with the subject of this research. Emerging trends of study in the area has been looked into. Based on these theoretical backgrounds, an analysis is made on the basis of the research questions. Making meaning out of the enquiry into conflicts, trends of violence and the various power relations between the communities need subjective interpretations. This has been done through the philosophical tradition of hermeneutic approach.

Organisation of the Study

The study has been divided into three chapters. The first chapter, '**Identity of the Meitei-Pangals in Manipur: An Analysis**' provides a detail enquiry and account on the identity of the Muslims in Manipur. This includes giving a theoretical explanation of the meaning of identity, the various traditions of and approaches of explanation on the subject and relating to the identity formation of the Muslims. A historical account of the social formation of the Pangal identity and the subsequent community formation has been traced here. Different debates on giving a nomenclature of the Pangals, the relation and differences on Pangal and Muslim identity and the various issues of identification and classification of identities have been discussed. Keeping in mind the subject of enquiry i.e the relation of identity with conflicts and violence, the subjective nature of understanding identity has been discussed, with respect to the relations with the dominant community, the Meiteis.

The second chapter, '**Critical Inquiries into the Relationships between Identity and Violence: The Meitei-Meitei Pangal Case**'. This chapter discusses the critical dimensions of understanding the relationships between identity and violence. In identifying the relationship, a conceptual explanation has been made to identify the conflict in the cause of violence between the two communities. Theoretical explanations and debates on both ethnic conflicts and violence have been discussed in detail. An explanation of the history of conflict in Manipur is placed before explaining the conflict between the Meiteis and the Pangals. This is to derive the various possible connections from across the perspectives of identifying the variables of the cause of conflict and violence. This has been done keeping in mind the emerging theoretical trend of explaining ethnic conflict and violence using the cognitive turns as explained by Rogers Brubaker et. al.(2004). After discussing in brief of the nature of ethnic relationships and boundary management between the two communities, which has been done by tracing the long history of association, giving special emphasis on symbiotic and reciprocal relations; the basic enquiry of the thesis is looked upon i.e, the relationship between what traits of identity induce to cause violence or whether a pattern of violent incidents happened over a period of time infers behavioral changes to the subjects to opt for a social relationship with a difference.

The third chapter, '**Nature and Pattern of Conflicts and Violence between the Meitei and Meitei-Pangals: An Analysis**' first discusses the various incidents of violence between the two communities. Explanation has been made by broadly categorizing the nature of violence observed in the last 4 decades into three types: 1) Conflicts and associated violence linked with religious beliefs and issues of sacred sites 2) Conflicts and violence based on hate and intimidation 3) Mob violence and Lynching. An in-depth explanation of religious based conflict and associated violence has been made, taking into consideration its possible relations with Meitei Religious Revivalist Movement. Theoretical models of "heirophany" given by Merce Eliade (1959) have been discussed comparing it with certain practice of reclaiming ancestral religious sites of the Meiteis under the revivalist movement, Sanamahi Movement. Moreover special emphasis has been given to see the emerging trend of violence based on hate and intimidation, giving appropriate examples. The final form of violence, mob lynching has been discussed using appropriate theoretical explanation from the social-psychological approach, where in the change in collective behavior of people has been discussed giving examples of the recent incidents of a spree of such violent incidents happened in Manipur as well as in other parts of Northeast. From these explanations of the incidents, a final critical analysis is made on the relationships between the Meiteis and Pangals. This has been done by taking cues of the various changes in socio-cultural and religious spheres of the Pangal society, as well as the impact of stereotypes and prejudice used against the Pangal community to be considered as different forms of misrecognition. These factors have been discussed as certain elements that assist in fomenting hate and violence. The chapter discusses violence using frames of explanation including politics of recognition and misrecognition, symbolic power and violence, based on the trends of incidents happening between the two communities under study.

Chapter I

Identity of the Meitei-Pangals in Manipur: An Analysis

What is Identity?

As per George Herbert Mead (quoted by Dunn, 1997), the sum total of people's conscious perception of their self as distinct from others is their identity. To him identity is developed within a social process through social interactions wherein the Hegelian dialectical conception of subject/object relations takes the form of an inter-subjective field of communicative action. Mead maintains that identity is formed through role taking behaviour by the subjects, where process of internalization takes place reflexively in the self. Thus for Mead the concept of identity is a function of a person's 'attitudes and dispositions taken from others, which becomes the basis of how one sees oneself as a social entity as well as a means of developing an identity.'¹⁸ Post structuralists like Judith Butler maintain that identity is an interior and organizing phenomenon of self that is constructed solely by discursive means. Thus for Post structuralists, the concept of identity is an objectivistic conception of a discursively determined subjects, eliminating the conventional notions of subjectivity through which a conscious meaning is developed in the Median sense¹⁹. Trimble and Dickson²⁰ maintain that at a certain level of understanding, identity is almost synonymous with ethnicity and quotes that sociologists like Herbert Gans (2003) considers identity a term no longer of use. Taking this narrative forward, we can look at the scope and foundation of the word ethnicity. The term *ethnic* has a Latin and a Greek origin, *ethnicus* and *ethnikas* both similar to nation. In Greek, *ethos* means custom, disposition or trait. Hence therefore *ethnikas* and *ethos* taken together can mean a band of people (nation) living

¹⁸ Dunn, Robert G. (Autumn, 1997). Self, identity and difference: Mead and the post structuralists. *The Sociological Quarterly*, Vol 38, No. 4. P. 688

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 689

²⁰ Trimble, Joseph E. & Dickson, Ryan. Ethnic Identity in C. B. Fisher & Lerner, R. M. (Eds.; in press), *Applied developmental science: An encyclopedia of research, policies, and programs*. Thousand Oaks: Sage. Internet source: Url : http://pandora.cii.wvu.edu/trimble/research_themes/ethnicity_identity.htm accessed on 6th April, 2017.

together who share and acknowledge common customs. Oommen²¹ describes ethnicity as a product of conquest, colonization and immigration and the consequent disengagement between culture and territory. For him, the concept of formation of ethnicity is through rupture between territory and other primordial attributes. However taking an ethno-symbolic approach, Smith (2000) explains ethnicity from the perspective of durability and its transformation in history and the continuing power and persistence of nations and nationalism. Smith here looks at the inner world of *ethnie* and the nation, by looking at the existing spirit of nation in individuals. He does this through the concept of prior ethnic ties and sentiments, their memories, myths, traditions and symbols; and by studying the changes they undergo as well as the symbolic components that endure. Weber defined ethnicity as the belief of social actors in common descent based on racial and cultural differences, among other factors.²² This is done through the Maurice Jackson's essay, *An Analysis of Max Weber's Theory on Ethnicity* (1982/83) which says that according to Weber (1968), what is important in ethnicity is the belief in, and not the fact of, common descent. So ethnic group according to Weber is not a group who are related, or a kin group, but those who believe they are related in the sense of a presumed common past²³.

In the same line there are several other concepts through which ethnic groups are defined based on the idea of linking to past orientation. Maurice Jackson (1982) paraphrased the different ways through which ethnicity has been defined by different scholars. Few concepts out of those can be mentioned, such as that of Barth, which considers ethnicity as related to 'the social organization of cultural differences' and ethnic identity as 'a matter of self ascription and ascription by others in interaction', (Barth, 1969. p. 6), rather than just ascriptive in character, ethnicity is about identification and sense of history, (Parsons 1975, p. 57); perceived alike by self and others because of common ancestry—real or imaginary, (Shibutani & Kwan, 1965, pp. 27-56); associations; identification with common origins, (Haller, 1973. pp. 280) etc.

²¹ Oommen, T.K. (1997). *Citizenship, nationality and ethnicity: Reconciling competing identities*. Wiley: Polity Press.

²² Weber, Max. (1968). Reprint (1978). *Economy and society: An outline of interpretative Sociology*. (Eds.) By Guenther Roth & Claus Wittich. P. 389.

²³ Op. Cit. Weber, 1982, pp. 389.

There is no single, widely agreed upon definition of ethnicity. Each definition vary according to the theoretical leaning and the vantage point from which the researcher's or scholar's intent on resolving its conceptual meanings. The different theoretical leanings on ethnicity and identity will be discussed further in the later part of this chapter. Identities may be individual as well as of collectivities. Shakil Ahmed (2011) maintains that it is possible that the 'identities' that one holds may be in conflict with one another. More so is true in the case of the different contexts from which identities are derived. Thus Ahmed maintains that it is the '*context*' that appears to have influenced the process of identity articulation and selection.²⁴ Hence Trimble and Dickson maintain that 'ethnic identity is an affiliative construct, where an individual is viewed by themselves and by others as belonging to a particular ethnic or cultural group.' With some extension to the basic definitions given above, Yinger defines ethnic group as 'a segment of a larger society whose members are thought, by themselves and/or others, to have a common origin and to share important segments of a common culture and who, in addition, participate in shared activities in which the common origin and cultures are significant ingredients' (Yinger: 1976:200). The ethnicity or ethnic identity of a group as per Yinger is defined by a mixture of language, religion, race and ancestral homeland with its related culture; however with none be the sole demarcating criteria. As per Sydney Shoemaker, the noun identity refers to the relation each thing has to itself and to no other thing. For him, identity is not just a matter of individual essence, however it is 'a set of traits, capacities, attitudes, etc., that an individual normally retains over a long period of time and that normally distinguishes that individual from others'.²⁵ In the light of these basic theoretical understandings an attempt can be made to understand the identity of the Muslims of Manipur.

Social formation of Pangal Identity: A brief socio-historical enquiry

As per various historical sources, the Muslims of Manipur had immigrated in phases at different points in time in history. The immigration in 1606 A.D. was the major movement whereas the rest of the immigrations before and after 1606 A.D. had happened in patches. According to the works of contemporary scholars like O. Bhogeshwor Singh(1973), Janab

²⁴ Ahamed (2011). *Essays in Sociology: Muslims in Manipur*. pp 11, 12.

²⁵ Shoemaker, Sydney. (2006). Identity & identities in *Daedalus*, Vol. 135. No. 4, On Identity (Fall, 2006), p. 41

Khan (1973), Kaji Hamid Ali (1979) etc. , the Muslim community has settled in Manipur from the year 1606 AD. This is being quoted by them as given in historical texts which are called ‘Puya’ like *Pangal Thorakpa* and *Nongsamei Puya*. The Muslims had invaded Manipur on the request of the then Manipuri prince Sanongba, who had joined hands with his borther-in-law, the then King of Cachar, Sapradas Narayan to wage war on the Manipuri King Khagemba. Several writers quote the historical text, the court chronicle of the Kings of Manipur, ‘*Cheitharol Kumpapa*’ which says that the invading Muslims (Pangans/Pangals), 1000 in numbers, were taken into captivity by the then king Khagemba. Several historical texts also give accounts of early settlement of Muslims in Manipur before 1606 A.D. However those happened in batches unlike the mass settlement in 1606 A.D. known as *Khagemba Khunthok*. Irene (2010) refers to A. Rahman who cites *Musalman’-e-Manipuri*, written in Urdu by Maulana Rahim-uddin, where it is mentioned that three Muslims, viz, Shaik Ruba, Gora Khan and Ashique Shah had come to Manipur form Rajbari(Pratapgarh Rajabari) and settled in Manipur with Royal permission.

Likewise there are some other historical accounts of Muslims’ migration into Manipur before the mass settlement in 1606 A.D. Hakim Ahmed Shah mentions J.C. Higgins quoting sources from Pandit Achouba which says, “The First Muhammadans, the Aribam family came to Manipur in the time of Naophangba”(Shah, 2008, p. 27; Irene, 2010, p. 32). The time period of King Naophangba as per Cheitharol Kumbaba was 428-518 A.D. Irene (2010) also gives that as per a document made available by the London School of Oriental and African Studies in 1983, it has been noted that as per the Palace Pandits (Meitei Scholars) the clan formation of Muslims in Manipur had initiated with the ‘Aribam Sagei’ since the period of King Naophangba (590-680 A.D.). The Pangal population in 930 A.D was said to be associated with the occupation of preparation of salt from dug wells. Irene also mentions of two Pasha and one Muslim village that flourished during the reign of King Irengba (984-1074 A.D.), as given in the Royal Chronicle ‘*Ningthourel Lambuba*’. Likewise there were several other examples of Muslims’ immigration into Manipur at different times in history and for different reasons. In the same way, Muslims had migrated into Manipur at multiple times after 1606 A.D. Irene maintains that the migration of Muslims into Manipur continued upto the reign of King Chandrakirti(1850-1886 A.D.). In the series of migrations and settlements of Muslims, one significant feature was the heterogeneous nature of people

and their origin. It is given in many sources that those who had entered in 1606 were mostly Sheikhs. Irene, (2010, p. 36) quotes Quazi Hamid Ali saying: “we know from the Nongsamai that the Saiyads came to Manipur during the time of Khagemba Maharaja, and one of them Saiyid Hussain by name, returning to Bengal, brought the Quran to Manipur” . Quazi Hamid Ali also states that possibly the Saiyads and Pathans from Gujarat had come to Manipur in search of Fortune²⁶.

In 1661 A.D., some Mughals, who were known to the Manipuris as ‘Mangals’ visited Manipur. It is also reported that in Sajibu (about April) of 1671, two Mughal brothers who were brick makers had come to Manipur.²⁷ The Muslims were offered land and local ladies by the then King to settle in Manipur. They were given enough freedom to practice their own faith and follow traditions of their choice. The contingent of Muslims included soldiers and people who practiced various professions. In course of time the settlement had moved from a city centric to peripheral areas, preferably river banks and other areas nearby water masses. This has been linked to the historical origin of the invading Muslims and their practice of Islamic faith, where people constantly needed water for the purpose of prayers. Different historical texts like *Nongsamei Puya*, *Pangal Thorakpa*, and contemporary texts such as *Manipuri Muslims* (1979) by Kaji Hamid Ali, *The Muslims of Manipur* (2010) by Salam Irene, *Essays in Sociology: Muslims in Manipur* (2011) by Mohd Shakil Ahmed etc. have given, of how in the structural formation of the Pangal Society, the newly settled Muslims assimilated to the local culture, food habits, formations of Kinship structures and many other social traits of the region. They picked up the local Manipuri language as their mother tongue. Along with this a myriad of languages such as Urdu, Hindi, Farsi and Arabic have been used in traces. Shakil Ahmed (2011) broadly divides the timeline for structural formation and understanding of the Pangal society under two periods, viz. the Pre Colonial Period and Under the British Colonial rule. During the 17th and 18th century, right after the creation of *Pangal Shanglen*²⁸ (Irene, 2010. p. 190) or *Mangkanshang* (Shah, 2008, p.77) there was a structural arrangement of the Pangal society based on a horizontal division of

²⁶ Ali, Quazi Hamid. (1979). *The Manipuri muslims*. p.12

²⁷ Irene, Salam (2010). *The muslims of Manipur*. Kalpaz Publications, Delhi p. 35

²⁸ *Loishangs* are departments set up by the King. *Pangal Shanglen* looks after the affairs of the Pangals only.

lineage groups called *Sagei*.²⁹ Sagei division is a kinship classification based on identification by the King, on the basis of “either individual skills or place of origin or the name(s) of the place(s) where they settled”³⁰. Shakil Ahmed (2011) opines that the *sagei* is a cognate group because of their consanguineous relationship. The Muslims were given enough space in political participation. A separate administrative units or community departments meant for the affairs of the Muslims called the Mangkangshang or Pangal Shanglen were set up by the Kings. The Muslims were also closely associated in all forms of services to the state through active participation in the mandatory *Lallup*³¹ and *Loipot haba*³² systems of the king. (A. Khullakpam, 2008). Thus through the processes of assimilation, integration, syncretism etc., the Muslim immigrants had developed a social community for themselves.

Formation of a community: Stepping Stone of Identity Formation

One basic way to understand the identity of the Muslims in Manipur is to understand the different narratives and discourses of the community formation and its integration to the nation of the Manipuris. Integration to a nation or a community goes beyond coming together of a group of people, getting a place to live and to get a new name of the community. Along with the settlement of a group of Muslims, forming a social and cultural organization, cultural products of a human settlement comes as markers of the community. This took place in tune with the existing geo-political situation, extending across time and space in the process of the formation. Thus as per Phil Bartle³³, it is akin to a system of systems, which is composed of things that are learned rather than transmitted by genes and chromosomes. Hence, over a period of time, amid processes of different kinds of exchanges and transactions such as acculturation, assimilation, absorption, amalgamation and adoption, the social and cultural elements of a community including the technical dimensions to shared beliefs are transmitted, stored and replicated through markers, symbols, memories

²⁹ Sagei is the name of non-hierarchical, horizontally spread clans

³⁰ Ahmed Shakil. ,Op cit. p. 84

³¹ Shah, Hakim A. (2008). Lallup was a system practiced during the kingship period in Manipur in which all males who are 17years to 60 were supposed to attain compulsory military service for the state for 10 days in each 40 days. p.188-18(2008).

³² op cit. Shah, Hakim A. (2008) A system of taxation from the subjects by the early Manipuri Kings.

³³ Bartle, Phil. (2010). *What is Community? A Sociological Perspective*. P. 3

Url: <https://edadm821.files.wordpress.com/2010/11/what-is-community.pdf> website visited on 18/03/2017

etc. On the other hand Phil Bartle also maintains that, in the whole process of making of a community and identity, a complete changing set of relationships, including attitudes and behavior of its members are involved.

Ahamed (2011) narrates the community formation of the Muslims in Manipur as a process blend with language, social arrangement and role of religion (Islam) playing a major role. He described the newly formed community as a conglomeration of people who speak Manipuri. From this we can understand that the Pangals are a Muslim community in Manipur who follow the Islamic religion; however that maintains peculiar social traditions and rituals which are rooted in the land. Historical accounts as well as various contemporary writers give different views and opinions on the correct nomenclature to be given to the Muslim community. The controversy lies in the usage of the nomenclature 'Pangal' or Meitei-Pangal or Manipuri Muslims. The term Pangal is said to be a corrupted version of the word Bangal. (Singh, 1965, p.18; Shah, 2008, p. 29; Irene, 2010, p. 22). The explanation for this being the word Bangal mean East Bengal and the earliest Muslim settlers who had come to settle in Manipur were called 'Bangals' meaning the Bangalese of East Bengals. Irene gives the reason that as most people of Manipur could not pronounce the word 'b' during the seventeenth century; it was pronounced as 'p'. Hence the people came to be known as Pangals.³⁴ Irene further writes that in Medeval times, any men from East Bengal, irrespective of their religion, were called 'Pangals'. RK Jhaljit maintains that after the Maharaja Khagemba (1597-1652), the word 'Pangal' was used exclusively as a nomenclature for the Muslims.³⁵ Salam (2003) writes that it is given in the Book *Yaad Dash Kursee E-Nama*, published by Circules, that King Khagemba used the word 'Pangal' for the first time. Kheiruddin Khullakpam (1997) maintains that the word 'Pangal' is derived from the word 'Panganba' which means brave one. He gives the narratives of how in the war between the King's men assisted by the Muslims fought against the *Maring* and *Tarao* army of the 'Senbi Kingdom', where the later were defeated. It is said that satisfied with the brave acts of the Muslim warriors; the king gave the title 'Panganba' meaning the 'brave one'

³⁴ Salam Irene. (2010). *The Muslims of Manipur* p. 22

³⁵ Jhaljit R. K.. (1965). *A Short History of Manipur*. Imphal: D.K. Store, Paona Bazar Road, January, 1965, pp. 98-99.

which later came to be known as Pangal.³⁶ T.C Hudson in his book, 'The Meitheis'³⁷ used the word 'Pangal'. Salam quotes N Khelchandra and L. Ibungohal Singh giving records in Cheitharol Kumbaba of thirty elephants, one thousand guns, one thousand Pangals, blacksmiths, artisans, musicians, grooms, washerman, horses and elephants keepers as being captured. Gangmumei Kamei also used the nomenclature 'Pangal', a word derived from Bengal, as the name of the community of the First Muslim settlement in Manipur in 1606 AD.³⁸ However the Gazetter of Manipur by E.W. Dun used the nomenclature 'Mussalmans' as the descendants of Bengali immigrants.³⁹ Salaam (2006) quotes M. McCulloch using the word 'Munniporee Mussalman' for the immigrant community, in the book 'Valley of Manipur'. However Robert Brown first used the nomenclature 'Meitei Pangal' in his book 'Statistical Account of Manipur'.⁴⁰ Ahmed (2011) described in detail of the issues, approaches, theory and concepts, discussed and used in the interpretation of identity and reality in the field of sociology and history, particularly in the context of the Pangals of Manipur. After taking a review of the various philosophical and epistemological underpinnings, methodological and theoretical tools in deciphering historical and sociological interpretations of the others (identity constructions), Ahmed quotes T.K Oommen's observation of the recent origin of the systematic articulation of the others in social science and how it has become a backbone in the field of identity studies in Social Science. Ahmed flagged off the inevitability in dealing with the multiplicities of interpretation of identities. The controversy or in-fact the differences that have cropped up about the nomenclature for the Muslim community can give us different leads to understand and expand the contours of historiography, interpretation and meaning making of phenomena at different levels of identity construction, theorization and knowledge production. Ahmed maintains that social theory regarding identity is not free from tensions. He quotes T.K Oommen saying that it's a tension between class politics and identity

³⁶ Kheiruddin Khullakpam, (1997). *Turko Afghan gi chada naoda*, Masjid Road, Lilong: M.I. Press. p. 35

³⁷ T.C. Hudson, (1989). *The Meitheis*, Delhi: D.K. Fine Art Press. p. 4.

³⁸ Prof. Gangmumei Kamei(1991), *The History of Manipur* (1826-1949). New Delhi: Vanita Printers 794. p. 99

³⁹ E.W. Dun. *Gazetter of Manipur*, Delhi. 1975. p. 14

⁴⁰ Robert Brown (2011). *Statistical Account of Manipur*, Delhi: Sanskaran Prakashak

politics⁴¹. In a plain understanding, the multiplicities of interpretation of individual or collective identities are general phenomena. Regardless of the different view point or the epistemological standpoint or the context from which the historians or writers have given their views of a specific nomenclature, i.e. Pangal, Meitei-Pangal or Manipuri Muslims for the newly formed immigrant Muslim community of Manipur, certain classical and modern trends of theoretical explanations and narratives on conceptualizing identity in general and ethnic identity in particular can give a clear understanding of the phenomenon in Manipur.

Basic Theoretical Narratives on Identity

‘The noun identity has two contradictory meanings. It is that which makes something or somebody uniquely different, as in identity documents, and it is also that which makes somebody or something the same as, or identical with, something or somebody else’ (Ashworth, 2011). Yinger (1997) says, in the process of defining ethnicity, one need to look at perspectives which looks for similarities amidst differences as well as differences amidst similarities. In the academic discourse of ethnicity and identity, there is a long debate between primordialist and constructionist or instrumentalist approaches of understanding. Classical scholars of the primordialist strand such as Clifford Geertz described this attachment as originated ‘from the givens’ i.e., those cultural elements that are considered as the assumed ‘givens’ – of social existence, such as bold ties, religion, shared language and customs. Hence in the primordialist discourse, ethnic identity is considered as naturally given and immutable.⁴² However constructivist or instrumentalist approach gives the understanding of ethnicity as an outcome of instrumental adaptation to shifting economic and political circumstances. Ashworth (2011), based on the constructionist model says that “identity is an outcome, a condition created largely through heritage, which may or may not be conveyed through ritual as the vehicle of transmission”. He maintains that this outcome is a condition and a state of mind and identification is the process through which it is created.

⁴¹ Shakil Ahmed (2011). Quoting Oommen, T.K. *Conceptual Reflections and Empirical Reformulations*, Inaugural Address in the VIII North West Sociological Conference at the University of Jammu, 28-30, October, 2004, pp. 1

⁴² Brubaker, Rogers, Loveman, Mara., and Stamatov, Peter. 2004, quoting Geertz, “*The Integrative Revolution*,” p. 109

The classical way of understanding ethnicity and identity is to look at the debate between primordialist and constructivist approach. ‘This debate pits an understanding of ethnicity as rooted in deep-seated or “primordial” attachments or sentiments against an understanding of it as an instrumental adaptation to shifting economic and political circumstances’⁴³. Both theories is said to have no adequate explanatory power when it comes to ethnic conflict (Gurr, 1994). However looking at the context of contemporary development in ethnic studies, we can look at the different narratives and theoretical approaches that give us better understandings. Cognitive approach is one such emerging trend that promises to recast both position as well as show complementariness of each other rather than exclusiveness. (Brubaker, Stamatov & Lovemen, 2004). To take the discussion further in order to understand the context of the Pangals in Manipur better, we can discuss each theoretical leaning in detail.

The primordialists treat ethnicity as naturally given and immutable. They consider ethnic identity as assigned at birth, inherent in human nature and is passed on from generation to generation. Hence for them the identity is fixed across time. Because ethnic differences under primordialism are ancestral, deep, and irreconcilable, ethnic conflicts arise inevitably from ‘ancient hatreds’ between ethnic groups and ‘mutual fear’ of domination, expulsion or even extinction (Geertz, 1963)⁴⁴. The primordialists believes that inter ethnic hatreds, fear and conflicts are because of differences in ethnic identities and these are bound to happen in a multi-ethnic society (Vanhanen, 1999, 58), (Afa’anwi, 2016). However the instrumentalists believe that ethnic identity is created as per the context or are politicized or manipulated for socio-economical or political ends. This usually happens for one ethnic group at the cost of another (Posen 1993; Collier and Hoeffler 1998; 2000; 2004; Chandra 2004; Ruane and Todd, 2004 as quoted in Afa’anwi, 2016)⁴⁵. The construction of ethnicity under instrumentalism is because of variety of reasons, which includes security concerns (Posen 1993); competition and inequality (Gurr, 1993a, 1993b and 1994); and greed (Collier and Hoeffler 1998; 2000; and 2004, as quoted in Afa’anwi, 2016). Instrumentalists reason

⁴³ Ibid, p. 110

⁴⁴ Ma’abo Che, Afa’anwi, 2016. *Linking Instrumentalist and Primordialist Theories of Ethnic Conflict*
Url: <http://www.e-ir.info/2016/06/01/linking-instrumentalist-and-primordialist-theories-of-ethnic-conflict/>
accessed on 24th June 2016.

⁴⁵ ibid

the causes of conflict as a manifestation of grievance/greed (Ellingsen 2000). However while instrumentalist view provides for a nuanced explanation of ethnic identity taking note of the socio-economic context, it is being critiqued of its weakness to explain the primordial understanding of ethnic bonds through ‘common blood’, shared values, shared threats etc. Ellingson maintains that politicization of ethnic identity through instrumentalisation leads to crystallizing primordial ethnic division, when grievances are disseminated. This he says fosters ethnic sentiments in an in-group against a perceived out-group threat. Under the cognitive approach, rather than looking at the various categories like ethnicity, nation, race etc. as objectified, rigid, separate entities in the world, it provides the dimensions of conceptualizing them as perspectives to understand the world. Hence it provides for a study at the subjectivist level, in terms of participant’s beliefs, thoughts, constructions, classifications, perceptions etc. Fredrick Barth had argued that ‘ethnicity is not a matter of shared traits or cultural commodities, but rather of practices of classification and categorization, including both self- classification and classification of (and by) others’⁴⁶. Here Brubaker and his co-authors have mentioned of how the basic social constructivist model of Fredrik Barth has been extended further by Richard Jenkins by emphasizing the interplay between self-identification and external categorization at various levels (individual, interactional and institutional) and contexts (formal and informal) in which categorization occurs.

Another commonly used theoretical framework of late, in describing identity formation and explanation of ethnicity is the social constructionist method. This theory originally flouted by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann in their work, *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966) has their basic premise that knowledge is grounded in social existence; i.e. as society changes so do our ideas, ideology and values. This means to say that certain realities have been projected through human rationalities that are distributed across the social order. Making meanings of these realities depend on the group which upholds a certain belief system and value, which the person associates. A change in the context or group relations

⁴⁶ Brubakers, Rogers, Loveman, Mara., and Stamatov, Peter. (2004), *Ethnicity as Cognition, Theory and Society* 33: 31-64, Kluwer Academic Publishers,

leads to change in the definition of realities that the person held.⁴⁷ Thus Berger and Luckmann say a man has multiple identities and rationales, depending upon his group membership. Carrying forward this basic concept Vivien Burr placed a better proposition of social constructionism by adding contexts of objectivity and reflexivity. She offers a discourse analysis perspective of social constructionism where she do away with the traditional approach of positivist science of psychology and sociology which according to her leads to a fundamental truth. For her, a constructionist approach gives truth in plurality of identities as per different contexts.⁴⁸ In the light of the theories discussed above, a detailed layout can be made of the multiplicities of identities and interpretation made for the identity of the Muslim community in Manipur and how we go about in understanding, in the web of theoretical explanations.

Making sense of the Pangal Identity

After looking at the various contestations in giving a nomenclature to the Muslim community, we can make sense of certain forms of interpretations, taking cue of the theoretical understandings as well as the context under which the specific nomenclatures are given. Syed Feroja (2007) discussed the discourse of the current claims by certain sections of the society that Muslims of Manipur are part of the 'Meiteis'.⁴⁹ She quotes Prof. Bhagat Oinam and D.A. Sadokpam's claim that Meitei's of Manipur comprises of the Meitei Bamons (Manipuri Brahmins), Manipuri Meiteis (Kshatriyas as well as the followers of pre-Hindu Sanamahi faith) and Meitei-Pangals. The main argument of the proponents of this understanding is that Meiteis used the term 'Meitei Pangal' because it denotes the mixed heritage of the Pangals through Meitei Women in earlier period and hence the term Meitei-Pangal is aptly suited because they have been indigenized and accultured. The explanation that Meitei is a way of life bonded by common language and common lineage system and inclusion of the Pangals in the fold of the term 'Meitei' along with the seven salai social

⁴⁷ M. Rose, Daniel. (1967). Reviewed work of *The Social Construction of Reality* by Berger, Peter & Luckmann, Thomas.

⁴⁸ Mackay, Robert. (1997). Reviewed work of An introduction to social constructionism by Vivien Burr. *The Canadian Journal of Sociology / Cahiers Canadiens de Sociologie*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Autumn, 1997), pp. 526-528

⁴⁹ Syed, Feroja. (2006). *Religion, ethnic identity and the state*, Unpublished M.Phil dissertation, submitted to JNU

groups, and the *Bamons*⁵⁰ and *Lois*⁵¹ is being pointed out as unacceptable. Now we can look at the basic understanding of the word ‘ethnicity’ described by Kamei⁵² in his work, a social- anthropological interpretation, which says, it is the ‘aspects of social relationships between groups, which consider themselves, and are regarded by others, as being distinctive. On the other hand Kamei also quotes Dipanker Gupta’s definition “ethnicity connotes the significances of the primordially constituted other as an outsider”⁵³. The distinctiveness of the group was already acknowledged during the time when king Khagemba had given the term ‘Pangal’ to the immigrant Muslim community. Hence from the definitions above, we can make out that, the very context and moment of acknowledging a community with a distinct and different new name was the opening moment of starting new social relationships between the two communities, which later forms the foundation of forming the sub-ethnic group⁵⁴ “Pangal”. These aspects of social relationships which shows distinctiveness of each group was manifested in different areas including acknowledgement of each other’s religion without mutual interference, maintenance of reciprocal and symbiotic social relations and acknowledging and respecting the roles (which might be similar or different) for a common social and geo-political cause of the time. On the other hand taking the basic definition of Anthony D. Smith, where he defines an ethnic group as, “a named-human population with a myth of common ancestry, shared memories and cultural elements-a link with a historic territory and a measure of solidarity”⁵⁵; giving a unique name ‘Pangal’ to the new human social collectivity with a shared quality of social behavior, thought and feeling, makes the Pangal community a distinct social identity.

Muslim Identity and Pangal Identity: The Relations and the differences

The Religious identity of a community forms the base of one’s primordial identity. The Muslims of Manipur, either Pangal or not, invariably carries the common identity, the Islamic Identity, as a result of their religious association with the Faith. To understand the

⁵⁰ Bamons were the upper-caste Hindu/Brahmins of Manipur during the hey days of Hinduism

⁵¹ Lois were the lower caste Hindu during the prime days of Hinduism in Manipur.

⁵² Kamei, Aphun. . (2008). *The Kabui Nagas of Manipur: A study of identity and identity-crisis*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. P. 7

⁵³ Gupta, Dipankar (1996). *The context of ethnicity: Sikh identity in a comparative perspective*. Delhi:Oxford University Press, p.3.

⁵⁴ Sub-ethnic because it is formed as an offshoot(a different entity) with components of Meitei community

⁵⁵ Smith, Anthony.D. (1986). *Ethnic sources of nationalism*, London: Routledge, p.27.

religious identity of the Muslims in Manipur, it is necessary for us to understand the history of Islam, the philosophical and general narratives of Islamic religion and its relationship with the community. It is also necessary to understand the social and political linkage of the community in religious respect with the larger Islamic world and with the local geography. We also ought to understand the cultural part of religion and religious part of culture and the interrelations between the two. Last but not the least it is also needed to understand the different theories and modes of interpretations of the communities' religious identity. By practice, the Muslims of Manipur belong to the Hanafi sect of the Sunni School of Jurisprudence in Islam. Just as any other groups in the myriad of versions or school of thoughts in Islam, the Manipuri Muslims have their belief rest on the fundamental Islamic declaration of faith in Allah as acceptance of Mohammad as the Prophet.⁵⁶ Belief system in Islam looks for an Ideal system which is always linked to the Quraan and its teachings. More so is with the belief of a Golden Age in Arabia in the 7th century. The Ideals of Islam are defined both in the Quran and the life of the Prophet Mohammad (which constitutes the *Sunna*- his behavior, practices, sayings and values). Together they form the *Shariah*, the 'path' for Muslims. It is being believed and practiced in the ideal sense of things that the Prophet "played the role of father, husband, chief, friend, and Prophet"⁵⁷. To follow the practice of the Prophet, the *sunna* remains the universal model of all Muslims across the world, keeping aside the deviations, forms and interpretations in practices. These are being given in large number of Islamic texts, together with the Quran, the Holy book of Islam. Thus Ahmed maintains that the ideal is "eternal and consistent" (op. cit. : p.3) and "provides and inbuilt mechanism in Muslim society for renewal and revival of the faith" (op. cit., p.4). Along with the *sunna*, the *Hadith*, or the traditions of Muhammad and his companions, remains the framework for defining an Islamic community and the basis of education and learning about the practical aspects of life. The Muslims of Manipur, as followers of the faith are expected to maintain the five basic rules/principles of Islam, which are, Recitation of Kalimah, Offering prayers (Namaz or Salat) five times a day, Fasting during the month of Ramzan, giving alms (zakat) to the poor and making a pilgrimage to

⁵⁶ Akbar S. Ahmad. (2001). *Discovering Islam: Making Sense of Muslim History and Society*, Washington

⁵⁷ Abu-Rabi, Ibrahim M. Reviewed work(s) of *Discovering Islam: Making Sense of Muslim History and Society* by Akbar S. Ahmad. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (Autumn, 1992), pp. 537-539

Mecca for those ables at least once in a lifetime. Over and above these basic traits of Islam, the Manipuri Muslims also as part of the Islamic world celebrate the annual to major Universal Islamic festivals of Eid-ul-fitr and Eid-ul-Adha.

A majority of the Manipuri Muslims, whether ethnic Pangals or not, belong to the Sunni fold of Islam, following the Hannafi School of Jurisprudence. It is said that there are no followers of Shiaism(Shah, 1994, p. 36). Some Qadiani(Ahmadiyya) Muslim surfaced among the Manipuri Pangal society during the later part of the 20th century(find reference). However Mufti Mohammad Safiullah expressed in a telephonic interview, “as per a consensus brought about by the Muslims of Manipur including the religious scholars, seminaries and common people, it was decided to maintain distance from them for a long time”. Here ‘them’ refers to the Ahmadi Muslims. In the 1980s and 1990s the Manipuri Pangal society shows an emergence of certain elements of Sufism. Though the origin and the context through which this sect had successfully swept across the Pangal society is yet to be researched upon, it was perhaps an influence from other parts of India. Manipur as of now has no Dargah or any sufi shrines. Hence there has never been any culture of people go Dargah or rituals of worshipping and reverence through songs and performances at Dargah. Though this new element of Sufism was in principle or doctrinally different from the Sufism followed in the rest of the world, there were certain similarities in forms of practices. There was a huge surge of people taking to sainthood locally called *pir*, who had followers usually from his own locality and from across the state.

Historical sources give that in April 1795, a group of seven Muslim Fakirs (saints) from Cachar travelled into Manipur. Of them Kashoudin (Kashimuddin) was the Pri Baba or the leaders of the fakirs. It is mentioned that they brought a huge transformation in enriching the Islamic way of life to the Muslims of Manipur⁵⁸. Though Pir babas or Fakirs are commonly known to be associated with Sufism, prominent sufi traits in the form of *tarika* practiced elsewhere have not been known to have introduced by them. Prominent religious scholar Mufti Mohammad Safiullah on 18th May, 2017, reveals that there are still elements of Sufism in Manipur, however he says, “the practice of Sufism in Manipur is limited to certain

⁵⁸ Op- cited. Shah, Hakim Ahmed (2008), Pp. 58

forms which are accepted by the Quraan and Hadith”. Congregations at large numbers, basically at night were common phenomena. These were headed by the *pir saab* , and *zikr or dhikr*, a peculiar form of devotional act by chanting the names of God, or repetitive chanting of certain phrases or prayers that praises the glory of God either silently in mind or vocally, e.g ‘*La Ilaha Ilallah*’ meaning ‘there is no deity but God (Allah), associated with certain movements of the body (superior part of the body, basically neck and head) in a rhythmic form. There are other forms of expressions through which union or absorption into the Deity; showing reverence, allegiance, or expression of the Glory of God were performed. A peculiar way which is somewhat similar to the Sufism’s way of seeking union with God through songs is the Manipuri Muslim’s ongoing practice of expressing the Glory of God through *marifat*, the local version of *na’at* [a poetic narration that praises the God (Allah) or Prophet Mohammad mostly popular in South Asia], a rhythmic narration of the Glory of God without any musical instruments. Though in principle it is Islamic in nature, owing to its lack of musical instruments, the Manipuri version in *marifat* has to a large extent, influences of local culture. The type of narration, the rhythm, tune and tempo of several *marifat* have many similarities with the traditional Meitei narrations like *Khonhjom Parba*, *Khunung esei* etc. However having said this, *marifat* has its own set of taste, tune, originality and distinctiveness that set it apart from the Meitei narratives.

Looking at the history of Muslims in Manipur following the Islamic faith, it can be said with certainty that the society is still in a continuous process of constructions and consolidation of the Islamic faith from time to time. There are historical accounts that say that the Muslims of Manipur were not ardent followers of Islam until the early part of the 20th century.⁵⁹ This has been linked with the social system into which the newly settled Muslims immigrants as well as the newly converted Manipuris had to face. Syncretistic forms of cultural and ritualistic practices were imminent and unavoidable in the newly formed community. Moreover the economic condition of the community were in a bad shape, where most members of the community were hard working labourers, farmers, artisans or soldiers, because of whose occupation a strict following of the Islamic principles were not possible (Irene, 2010, p. 169). Another reasoning of this phenomenon is that of the late entry of

⁵⁹ Brown, R. (1975)(Reprint). *Statistical Account of Manipur*. Delhi: Sanskaran Prakashak

Islamic education. It has been given in many texts that learned Islamic scholars started to surface on the soil of Manipur only in the early part of the 21st century (Irene, 2010, pp. 168-169; Ahmed, 2011, p. 114). From these explanations we can make out that the practice of Islam in Manipur is still in an evolving phase. In the quest for the so called, ‘seeking for the ideal life on Earth and world-after’ the Muslim society in Manipur seems to be in a continuous encounter by different shades and knowledge of Islam. In this capacity we can say that the entry of sufi traits and people flocking all of a sudden to follow the practice of community gatherings for *zikr* sessions, just to be forbidden after a decade, as a manifestation of lack of an established structure of practices under ‘a particular Islamic trait’, or as an outcome of a system, rigidly bounded by “schism” of a particular trait where knowledge, power and practices have blended together beyond any other means of interjection.

Issues of Identification and Classification in Shaping Boundaries between Identities

Richard Jenkins contends that internal identification and external classification by others should go in balance. Hence it is not enough to assert an identity by self only, it must also be validated from the significant others.⁶⁰ In the process, we draw upon identifications of similarity and differences between the two groups; thereby signify the existence of others for creating relationships with them.⁶¹ Identification of collectivities remains a major issue in understanding and misrecognizing an identity by self and by others. Subtle issues of self identification can be made out in the self identification process of the Pangal identity. Religion, culture and political participation are certain areas where a community can identify markers of its uniqueness and differences with others. Giving his ideas on forced attribution of identity by an outside entity, a case of misrepresentation, Amartya Sen says, “removal is challenging enough, but no less radical is the surgical implantation of a ‘real me’ by other who are determined to make us different from what we think we are (Sen, 2006, p. 9)”. Giving his wisdom on the agency of choice for a person to determine the priorities for affiliations and associations to be self identified as belonging to a particular entity, he says

⁶⁰ Jenkins, Richard, (2008). *Social Identity*. London and New York: Routledge Publications. P. 4

⁶¹ Op cit. p. 105.

one should value, defend and recognize (op.cit, p. 5). However Sen maintains that our freedom to assert ourselves has to have some limitations naturally, because in the eyes of the others, it can sometimes be extraordinarily limited (ibid, p. 6). Sen is of the opinion that unquestioned acceptance of one's imposed identity, or a discovery of one's self identity conditioned by some imposing forces is one basic reason for fomenting of violence (ibid, p. 9).

The biggest change and in-fact the most explicit evolution in the Pangal society of Manipur in the last few decades are in the field of religion and culture. Process of Islamization started in the 1st quarter of the last century, however increasingly there has been stronger consolidation of the faith in the recent decades. Concerns of degradation of syncretistic traditions have come up, in the wake of conflicts between the two communities.⁶² This change gives an appropriate area for forming a new schema of identification, different from the traditionally known ones. The important questions are, how do the Pangals locate their identity in the Islamic world and how does it effect in the management of boundaries with other communities? How a Pangal identity associated with the Muslim Ummah is significant as compared to an identity a Muslim community associates with a particular geography? Is the islamization process a counter approach of self identification to the process of homogenization and assimilation apparently being leased out by the dominant Meiteis? This will help us make out what kind of similarities and differences do the community share with the rest of the Islamic world in terms of religion and culture and most specifically the way how one identify as a Muslim or a Pangal vis-à-vis the outside Muslim world. Here we can relate to the seminal explanation of Durkheim (Durkheim, Emile, 1995, translated by Fields, Karan E. p. 232) where Islam across the world can be seen as a collective representation of a faith with the Quran serving as a totemic symbol, not as an object to be revered as a God, but to connect the humanity with the divine words of the Almighty Allah. However the problem of boundary management with other communities lies in the primacy one gives to express one's identity associated with the local geography. The thin line that separates the

⁶² Phanjoubam, Pradip. (14-04-2016). Manipur's traditional syncretistic culture is in danger of being destroyed. Url: <https://thewire.in/29606/manipurs-traditional-syncretic-culture-is-in-danger-of-being-destroyed/>. Website visited on 12/05/2017

distinction between religious part of culture and cultural part of religion is the main area where in-group classification and social categorization becomes an issue.

Moreover another case of self identification among the Pangals that shows signs of emic misrecognition, perhaps a manifestation of a force of an unseen symbolic power relation in the society can be discussed. In terms of use of language- the Pangals have a peculiar way of speaking *meiteilon*, which is to a large extent different form the *meiteilon* spoken by the Meiteis. This different dialect of the Pangals has served as the ethnolect of the community for more than 400 years. This is both in terms of the tone, pitch, flow and to some extent different vocabularies. After more than 400 years of using the language as their mother tongue, the differences still existing in the *meiteilon* used by the two communities could mean either the language assimilation has not yet fully achieved or either a saturation point has come where the Pangals have maintained a level of assimilation as though it has become a convention for their society. However the Pangals still express their inclination to imitate the style and tone of the way how the Meitei speak, each time they interacts with a Meitei. Whereas they unconsciously revert back to their original tone the moment he or she mingles with people of their own community. Now the basic question arises, if the Pangals are resorting to these behavioral trait because of their choice, or a compulsion, or is it and a product of a subtle, taken for granted and unconscious behavioral trait induced by a power relation instrumental in the society. Taking into consideration the serious mocking and stereotypes against the particular way of speaking and tone of the Pangals, this behavior can be considered as a manifestation of misrecognized obedience because of a lasting mental disposition, shaped by an enduring force in the society. In a similar fashion of easy pull towards imitation, however in different context of change in cultural content due to persistent interface with exotic cultural elements, it has been noted that the Pangals are increasingly adapting to use of Urdu, Arabic and Hindi vocabularies in their normal conversations. This is being viewed as a product of islamization through Islamic education brought about by the Moulanas (op. cit. Ahmed, 2011).

Beyond the Communion: From Objective Domain to Subjectivity, Trends in Understanding Identity

As mentioned above, construction of identity goes beyond the sociological construction of a community, the basic foundation of identity formation. The day the Muslim immigrants had been captured by the forces of King Khagemba in 1606 AD, before any substantial amount of blood was spilled; a healthy negotiation was made between the Muslim forces and the King of Manipur. This event can be considered in the history of Manipur as one of the most significant moment. The phenomenal decision taken by King Khagemba, and the wisdom imparted by the invading Muslims in deciding and opting for a peaceful alternative can perhaps be seen/considered as the seed of imagination of a secular, stronger and pluralistic Manipuri Nation in the times that follows. The soldiers were allowed to settle in Manipur, were given appropriate names of clans (*Sagei*) as per certain parameters set by the king without specific conditions, however based mostly on the place of origin, the particular skill the person has or certain other factors such as particular achievements. They were also given local ladies to marry and adequate land to cultivate for themselves and for the King. However right from the time when the soldiers were allowed to settle, there was a continuous process of the Muslims merging into the society of Manipur. This has been a continuously evolving process involving set of interactions, including construction and exchange of human behavioral traits that provide meanings and expectation between its members, and actions with an approach towards shared expectations and values.

A continuous formation, change and evolution in different dimensions of a community or society had taken place. These include the new settlers' participation at the level of technological, institutional, political and social fields. The rejection of their own language and adopting a completely alien language and emerging into a new society could only be possible when the immigrant Muslims unite and merge themselves into the primordial ethos of the local geographies. Looking from the trajectory of community formation since 1606 A.D. and the period that continues, where the Muslim community manifests its rootedness into the social, political and cultural ethos of the land; we can see the gradual formation of a collective identity in the form of common subjects under the King. This can take us to Benedict Anderson's concept of 'Imagined communities' considering the way how the

Muslim community merged into the society of Manipur to become an unavoidable part of a Kingdom, where it manifested ‘a strong sense of oneness of an imagined community’. Anderson provides a theory of nationalism which is applicable to sovereign nations as well as to group identities. According to Anderson, a nation is “an imagined political community and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign”⁶³. So for him, a nation is more of a product of community’s creative imagination than of a product of sociological conditions. Anderson, in his work, quotes Gellner saying, “Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist.”⁶⁴ Considering the political, social and economical condition of Manipur and the context through which the captives of war have been allowed to settle in Manipur by the then king Khagemba, we can put that episode in the History of Manipur as another major event of integration into the erstwhile Manipuri Kingdom. Undoubtedly the event of 1606 A.D. was the biggest immigration which changed the demographic, social and political landscapes of Manipur. Feroja Syed argues,

*The main reason for not allowing the Muslim soldiers to return to Taraf by the Maharaj was because of the fear that, if the Muslim soldiers were made to return, then they would make another attack. Other possible reasons for settling them must have been the realization by the Maharaj, the possibility of further advancement in Manipur if they allow these Muslims who were masters in varied occupations to settle. Also, these Muslims were efficient soldiers who fought bravely against the Manipuris under their proficient commanders till the end even though the Cachari soldiers fled in between the battle. So, from these, one can clearly see that the Maharaj must have realized the need of these brave soldiers in safeguarding the territories of Manipur*⁶⁵

B. Kullachandra writes that King Khagemba had the aspiration to increase the manpower by increasing the population in the very scantily populated Manipuri Kingdom of the time. This was driven by his aspiration to expand his horizon of administration, power, social and economic condition of the land/nationalities of the Kingdom. B. Kullachandra Sharma opines

⁶³ Anderson, Benedict (1991) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, New York: Verso, PP .4

⁶⁴ Ibid. p 6

⁶⁵ Feroja, Syed. (2007). *Ethnicity, Identity and the State: Pangals in Manipur*. p. 12

that the reason why he had given local ladies to the war captives was to make sure that they did not return to their place of origin and they settle in Manipur permanently. (Sharma, 2010, p. 7).

The period of Khagemba (1597-1652 A. D.) was marred by political instability inside Manipur because of enmity among the royal princes and also because of various attacks by the neighboring tribal from the hills. People in the low lying areas of the Manipur Valley were under continuous threat. Jyotirmoy Roy quotes Sir James Johnstone saying, “The early history of Manipur is lost in obscurity but there can be no doubt that it has existed as an independent Kingdom from the very early periods”⁶⁶ He further says that during the days when the Aryans were progressively colonizing the India sub-continent, Manipur was invaded by different people in phases. As early as 750 A.D. during the reign of Naothingkhong, Meitei kingdom had started fighting with the Nagas called Angom.⁶⁷ Roy writes that fighting with any of the Naga communities have always remained a perpetual feature of the history of Manipur. Giving his opinion about the social and political connections with the Nagas, he says that generally the Nagas maintained a distinct cultural identity of their own and that politically the Meitei Kings failed to enjoy allegiance from them. They were always in lookout for opportunities to rise against the Manipuri King.⁶⁸ This clearly shows the existence of a huge gap in the social and political fabric between the Meiteis and the Nagas from the early period. A series of invasion and raid followed in the following centuries. In the 8th century, Samlong Pha, brother of the Pong king had visited Manipur as a part of his raiding expedition through Cachar and Tripura. It is also given that the King of Mungman (Pong) had raided many kingdoms including the Chutiyas of Upper Assam, Manipur and the Arakan victoriously during the 13th century. Roy has also talked about Ava and Pong invasions which are mentioned in the chronicles of Ava and Shan Kingdoms as well as known through the local literatures and cultures. However he cleared that no records of such invasions are found till the 18th century as such. The next mention of invasion in Manipur is that of 1220 A.D. invasion by the Pong Kingdom. This was followed by the Chinese invasion in 1250 A.D., as mentioned by Colonel Johnstone, however

⁶⁶ Roy, Jyotirmoy. (1973). *History of Manipur*. Eastlight Book House p. 51

⁶⁷ *Ibid* p. 23

⁶⁸ *Ibid* p.

differently opinioned to have occurred at different time under different kingship, by other writers like Hodson and A. D. Bijoy Panchali. Mention was also made of a Burmese invasion during the reign of Khormba, which was pushed back by the King's force; while at the same during the absence of the king, the Tankhuls made an attack on the Imphal valley, which was said to have successfully fought back by the Queen Linthoi-Ngambi and other women. On the other hand, Phanjaobam,⁶⁹ quoting Mackenzie⁷⁰, writes, "the early history of Manipur was barbarous in extreme. It was not only marked by constant raids of the Maipuris into Burma, and of the Burmese into Manipur, but by internal wars of the most savage and revolting type, in which sons murdered fathers and brothers murders brothers, without a single trait of heroism to relieve the dark scene of blood and treachery". Making a reference with this situation, we can refer to what Scott (2009) had predicated, which is being quoted by Phanjoubam⁷¹, that Manipur at that time was in short supply of manpower and the *Laloo* system that was made compulsory by the king was an ingenious mechanism to optimize the available manpower.

Keeping these political and social conditions of Manipur in mind, starting from the early age and precisely during the period of King Khagemba; from the context where intricate diplomacy was handled by King Khagemba, we can make sense of the positive aspects of the King's imagination of allowing the 1000 strong Muslim fighters to settle in Manipur with a rather constructive interpretation. The period that followed shows a gradual formation and evolution of a community and construction of identity not just of the community but also as a part of an imagined community, a collective identity of a common nationality of Manipur. The idea conceived by King Khagemba could just be part of his administrative arrangement brought by the situation of that time. However looking at the trajectory of the political and social development of Manipur from that period onwards, we connect deny the significance of contemporary social and political theories of nation, nationalism and society as having a direct connection to the significant past. The concept of nation by Renan in the form of "We the People", Anderson's concept of "Imagined Communities" and Gellner's

⁶⁹ Phanjoubam, Pradip. (2016). *The North East Question, Conflicts and Frontiers*. New Delhi: Routledge Publications,. Pp. 92

⁷⁰ Mackenzie, Alexander.(1999) *History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal*. New Delhi: Mittal Publications, Pp. 149

⁷¹ Op cited Phanjoubam, Pradip. Pp. 92

concept of constructing a nationalism in the form of ‘invention of nations were it does not exists’, all have their locale of origin in contemporary times, however we cannot negate the fact the precursor of the present Manipur had its seed in the significant past. The various developments amongst the Pangals in contemporary times including active participation in the formation of Constitution of Manipur which was drafted in 1947 and inclusion in the subsequent formation of a government based on elected representative of the people, gives a complete picture of how in the evolution of Manipur as a Nation, it connects the ethos of the past with the values of the present. The inclusion of representatives from all the hills and valley, including the Pangals in the Constitution Making Committee of 1947 and the subsequent Legislative Assembly elected through universal adult franchise gives a clear picture of the imagination of oneness, the long history of togetherness evolving into a new modern form of nation and its government. Here we can remind of what Oommen (1997) argues, that the primordial beginning, people-hood was based on the coincidence of territory and language. People who sustain this connection constitutes nation. Taking into consideration the primordial connection the Pangals have made through the adoption of Manipuri as their mother tongue signifies this concept.

Chapter II

Critical Inquiries into the Relationships between Identity and Violence: The Meitei-Meitei Pangal Case

The history of humanity can be considered as multi-layered, multi-coloured depository of violent incidences that has taken different structures, forms and natures at different times and contexts. While studies and research in violence are often said to be inclined towards seeing these violent incidences in history as separate, discrete acts that are independent from one another, they are known to share numerous similar traits. The commonality of motivation and perception to take up violent act is one such similar trait⁷². There is no single definition of violence that can convey the meaning of its different forms and substances. This is precisely because of the very subjective nature of interpretation of various forms of violence. However having said this, one basic definition of violence by Peter Iadicola and Anson Shupe (2003, p. 23) is “violence is any action or structural arrangement that results in physical or non-physical harm to one or more persons”. Violence can be broadly of different types, physical violence, non-physical violence, symbolic violence etc., and of different forms such as institutional violence, interpersonal violence and structural violence which are interrelated⁷³. Violence can be anthropogenic in nature or natural. In the same manner the way how people perceive of violence is different as per their experience and context.

In order to understand better the roots of conflicts and violence between the Pangal and Meitei community, it is imperative for us to go through the socio-political history of the area and certain other factors which are indispensable in mapping out the nature and pattern of violence persistent between the two communities. This will help to establish possible connections in terms of genealogy and typology of inter and intra communities conflict and violence, that have happened in the area. As mentioned in the previous chapter, that the

⁷² Alvarez, Alex & Bachman, Ronet. (2008). *Violence: The Enduring Problem*. Singapore: Sage Publications. p. 3

⁷³ Peter Iadicola and Anson Shupe. (2003) (Third Edition). *Violence, Inequality and Human Freedom*. Lanham, New York: Rowman & Littlefield publishers Inc. P. 23

history of Manipur is dotted with various forms of violence, war, conflicts etc. While the war loving and adventurous kings of Manipur were in constant encounters and interfaces with enemies across a vast stretch of land in this region of South Asia, there were also intermittent, yet lethal close encounters between various ethnic communities in the state. An attempt to link some of the important social, political and cultural factors can get us to the bottom-line of the conflict and violence happening between these two communities. Before going on to study the incidents of violence in particular, it would be more meaningful to study the conflicts in the violence,(i.e. the antagonistic relations between parties that cause the violence) and the patterns if so exist, in the multiplicities of such conflicts. In the last five, six decades, Manipur has undergone a huge transformation, in terms of its socio-political and cultural spheres. These factors include the given below:

- 1) Emergence of ethnic consciousness and ethnic assertions from various sections of the society (Shimray, U.A. 2001, p. 3674).
- 2) A huge surge of political assertions, militant uprisings and anti-establishment campaigns from various sections of the society (ibid. 3674).
- 3) The changing economic structure brought by globalisation and the expansion of border trade with Burma as the gateway. A substantial shift from the traditional agricultural-based economy to market based economy.
- 4) Porous border with Burma, leading to large chunk of population dragged into illegal trade including drug, timber, precious stones and other businesses.
- 5) Unstable political situations in the neighboring Arakan and Chin states in particular and the whole of Burma in general, leading to ethnic migrations into Manipur.
- 6) Increasing internal dissent and ethno-nationalist uprisings, within and without. Anti-AFSPA and anti-militarization movements being the most significant.
- 7) Opening up of market due to globalizing forces and a surge of encroaching cultural and economic incursions into the traditional public space and economic arenas of the local population.
- 8) Religious and cultural changes, including import, revivalism, syncretism etc.

Against the backdrop of these developments we can map out a trajectory of the growth of violence across Manipur in general and between the Meitei and Pangal community in Particular.

A Brief Background

Manipur is a small state, however a melting pot of multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-sub-national identities (Oinam, 2003, p. 2031). As much as the demographic, geographical and topographical features are varied in nature, the nature of conflicts between the different human collectivities are also multiple. The major reason for the cause of conflict is the identity formation and quest for exclusivity, integration and dominance by more than 30 tribes and communities⁷⁴. British colonialism brought about a crystallization of ethnic identities among the tribes inhabiting the state. Categorization of the Kukis and Nagas based on certain classificatory features such as geographical position, physical and linguistic similarities, demarcation of administrative units were done without taking into consideration the composition of the ethnic communities and their boundaries (Piang, 2015, p. 159). This step of categorization, which is commonly viewed as taken up for administrative convenience was also the point of origin for ethnic conflicts between groups. Manipur is similar to mainland India in terms of the heterogeneities, complexities and variations of demographic contents and ethnic relationships. However its distinctive feature is its extremely different land and people relationships in various parts of the state⁷⁵. In an effort to map out a pattern and continuity of conflicts in the state, and to understand the evolution in the behavior of people over a period of time; a detailed discussion of the various studies on conflicts in Manipur, and a cross evaluation of the theoretical and conceptual relations between the ideas can help us in understanding the emerging conflict between Meitei and Pangals.

Various forms of conflicts and associated violence exist in contemporary Manipur, of which some has a long history and some are of recent origin. While the area of conflicts may vary i.e, social, political or cultural spheres, the common feature in all of them is the presence of political element as an underlying element. Of the different conflicts and associated

⁷⁴ Op Cit. Oinam, Bhagat (2003). P. 2031

⁷⁵ Op. Cit. Oinam, Bhagat. (2003). P.2031

violence, of late the bone of contention seems to corner around vying over economic and material resources. However this is not to undermine or negate the other possible factors. Oinam, (2003, p. 2031-2037) highlights certain conflicting issues visible in the state. These are 1) the issue of land to people ratio and the inability of the majority valley dwelling non-tribal people who inhabits the one-tenth area of the state, to purchase land and settle in the hill districts which constitute nine-tenth area of the state. 2) Ethnic assertion among the tribal communities, on the one hand to maintain their unique identity and on the other hand the politics to integrate the smaller tribes in the larger folds. 3) The assertions regarding the politics of language, over the issue of using Manipuri as the official state language. Of the various conflicts in contemporary Manipur, the most important have been the Kuki-Naga conflict, Kuki-Paite conflict and Naga-Meitei conflict. However of late there have been serious conflicts between Meitei-Kuki and importantly between Meitei and Meitei- Pangal.

One common feature in the types of conflicts happening in the state is it's ethnic in nature, if not exclusively. On the other hand the similarity in pattern lies in fraternal alliance amongst ethnic communities based on collective consciousness. Oinam (2003: p. 2032) maintains that these two patterns have objective relationships and are connected by a "semi causal connectives", a relationship determined by a combination of change of events and "praxiological intervention"⁷⁶. Hence he is of the opinion that the praxis is moved by a collective consciousness governed by material conditions. Piang (2015, p. 158-176) is of the opinion that the major cause of conflicts between the hill tribes is because of overlapping territorial claims, which has its roots in the process of ethnicisation started by the colonial British. Hence Piang maintains that one of the root cause of violence among the hill tribes lies in the process of "challenging the presence of other groups by settlerising the respective others".⁷⁷ Ranjit⁷⁸ however sees in the recent development among the tribal communities, a process of change of identity and shifting alliances within the tribal groups, with the broad labels like 'Kuki' , 'Naga' and 'Mizo' becoming the loci of group alignment. He maintains that the process of assimilation and ethnic consolidation of tribal groups into the Naga clan has more political reasons than the notion of common origin or common history as stressed

⁷⁶ Op cited. Oinam , 2003

⁷⁷ Op.cit. Piang. P. 169-171

⁷⁸ Ranjit, RK (1988). *Emergent Ethnic Process in Manipur* in Manipur Past and Present: The Heritage and Ordeal of a civilization Vol 1. edited by Naorem Sanajoaba. Mittal Publications, Delhi. P. 92-96

by Parsons, Hughes and Hughes in defining ethnicity. However this is not to negate the fact that cultural ways of integration is as much active as the former. The Naga fold is much forward and successful in their endeavor to bring forth NAGA as a political identity, much under the revolution of NSCN (IM). In the same way, there has been a significant process of hegemonic ethnic assimilation and identification processes among the Kuki tribes, which involved several processes of migration, settlement and hegemonic influences of the bigger Chin-Kuki group such as Thadou, which was however resisted by the smaller clans. The Kukis are however not much successful in their endeavor for reasons pertaining to in-fights between tribes of the same Chin-Kuki origin, a manifestation of intra-tribe struggle for power and influence. Kuki as a political identity is has not yet been successfully appropriated. Hence to see KUKI under a same cultural umbrella is not possible yet, despite many attempts made. Thus Oinam (op.cit p. 2032) observes that among the hill tribes, the basic factors of conflicts and violence are because of demographic configurations and problems of migrations and settlements. However another tangent of looking into the conflict situation in Manipur, and in fact one that is most relevant in the present condition is that of conflicting beliefs of the idea of 'nation'. The increasing collective consciousness of the people and their politically motivated identity assertion has of late advanced into a conflicting state of different views of the idea of Manipuris as a 'nation'. Akoijam (2001, P. 2810) maintains that,

The present impasse in Manipur cannot be understood with the framework of 'tribal conflict' for the issue is not only akin to the 'tribal vs non-tribal conflict' but also involves conflicts of identities casts in the image of 'nationhood'. Here the identity of a 'nation' which evolved against the backdrop of the history of the Meiteis and its kingdom since the first century of the Christian era is in conflict with another identity, the relatively recent identity of the Nagas as a 'nation'.

Oinam (ibid, p. 2035) is of the opinion that trend that follows in the ideological constructions for self determination and ethnic assertion, or assertion of political or cultural identity; have increasingly started to follow the discourse of western liberal democracy. However he doubts if those values have been internalized by the people. On the other hand the tribes have of late used international declarations and covenants as their anchoring point

for drawing legitimacy of claims over their land as the “right of the peoples and nations to sovereignty over their natural wealth and resources” (UN General assembly Resolution no. 1803). When competing claims of these type overlap, resorting to violence becomes the indispensable way for the parties to realise the community’s inalienable rights.⁷⁹

A close evaluation of the trend and pattern of conflicts in Manipur can get us to an understanding, which of-course should not be taken as an over-generalization, that the consciousness among the ethnic communities are somewhere always related to interests and apprehensions about land and natural resources. This is perhaps true for the whole region of North-East India. Walter Fernandes maintains that because of the low investment and high unemployment rate, the importance of land as people’s livelihood is reflected among the communities of North Eastern States⁸⁰. Fernandes also maintains that one major reason for the cause of ethnic conflicts in North East India is the problem of immigration and land encroachment.⁸¹ Oinam maintains that over and above the political consciousness that several tribes and communities of Manipur have achieved, there has also been an increasing consciousness of land as a ‘long term-reliable capital for all development purpose in the state.’⁸² There was no issue in migration and settlement as long as land was surplus and production was sufficient. Thus from the immigration of the Pangals in the 17th century to the migration and settlement of Chin-Kuki tribes from Burma during the later part of the 20th century, there seemed to have no issues amongst the communities in Manipur. However with increasing land to people ratio and with increasing consciousness about land as a capital, conflicts have started between the so called natives and settlers.

Another perspective of looking at the conflict situation in Manipur is through the lens of formation of power blocs among communities and the way how they derive legitimacy in indulging in violence. Kshetrimayum (2009), in his essay, *Shooting the Sun: A Study of Death and Protests in Manipur, 2009* refers to the violent situation in the state from the 1980s as akin to a state of siege and a ‘state of exception’ (Agamben 2005). The reason, for which he says, cannot be solely attributed to the presence of Armed Forces Special Power

⁷⁹ Op Cit. Oinam, p. 2034

⁸⁰ Fernandes, Walter. (2005). *North Eastern India: Land, Identity and Conflicts*, Silver Jubilee Lecture, GB Pant Institute of Social Sciences, Allahabad

⁸¹ Fernandes, Walter. (April 2008). Land as Livelihood vs Land as Commodity in India, *Agenda* Vol. 11: 1-5,

⁸² Op. cit. Oinam, p. 2034

Act, (AFSPA), 1958 (Akoijam 2001, Chenoy 2005). The reason cannot be also attributed wholly to a struggle of resources- land, people, trade etc. (Oinam, 2003, 2008; Shimrey 2001). He attributes the reason also to the proliferation of what he calls 'various power centers'. Thus in the struggle of power between power centers, the state subjects becomes equivalent to bare life, stripped of legality, where one finds difficulty in enforcing his or her rights. He mentions the killing of an SDO of Kasom Khullen, Thingnam Kishan and his two associates, Aribam Rajen and Yumnam Token by the NSCN (IM) in February 2009. Giving his view of a general condition in Manipur, he mentions of similar cases of violence such as the 'mass rape' of 21 Hmar women on 16th January, 2006, the killing of Rishikanta of the Imphal Free Press and the extra judicial killing of Thangjam Manorama. It is mentioned that the NSCN (IM) have resorted to the killing as if killing is the final solution to a problem. Thus the question comes of how NSCN derived legitimacy for resorting to a repressive action, giving it as an expression of exercising their right to take someone's life. It will not be an overestimation to mention that this is not an isolated case of the particular killing incident. Coupled with these problems are other issues of conflicts of interests over geographically and economically important locations, locations of religious and mythical importance and other issues of cultural and symbolic importance. Khshetrimayum contends that there is a cloud of anxiety, fear and tension in the air, when many unnatural deaths taking place in the state cannot be articulated in terms of law and justice; and the ritualised form violent protests keep taking place, as if the society cannot pass over in silence what it cannot be comprehend⁸³. Hence the intermittent incidents of sporadic violence coupled with weak mechanism for getting justice serves as the driver for change of behavior among the masses, making them prone to violence. In this scenario the expression of anxiety and condemnation of these kinds of violence in the state is almost completely done through protests, bandh, strike etc. This has become almost ritualized as if the collective psyche of the people, their behavior and action have adapted and entangled in a vicious cycle of this kind of expression. Under the cloud of these trends of conflict situation and associated violence, backed by the peculiar socio-economic condition, anybody tends to become an arbitrary authority of indulging in violent activities. This short introduction over the general pattern and trend of conflicts and violence in Manipur across the geographical expanse and

⁸³ Op.cit. Kshetrimayum, p. 54

communities can now take us to another level of examination into the conflicts between the Meiteis and Meitei-Pangals. However before this, a comprehensive understanding of the various theoretical explanations and debates on identity and violence in general and with particular emphasis on the pattern of conflict happening in Manipur in particular, will take the discussion to the specific context of Meitei versus Meitei-Pangal conflicts.

Theories of Ethnic Conflicts

The basic theoretical approach ethnic violence is the classical theory of ethnic conflict. The conflict theory provides an explanation for the rise of an ethnic conflict based on a strain between the relations of two ethnic or sub-ethnic groups. The strain may be produced because of conflicts in material relations. Marx's theory of social class explains the concept of social stratification, conflict and inequality in the society. Dahrendorf maintains it is necessary for us to not only observe the social conflicts per se but to also look into the specific social structures.⁸⁴ Horowitz maintains that most definitions of conflict embody an element of struggle, strife and collision and hence conflict is different for competition. While most of the ethnic conflict studies are done in the context of modernization, just as Horowitz (ibid, p. 96) refers to ethnic conflict as an integral part or even product of modernization, a context based study through this lens would need to see the various connections that modernization or for that matter change in political economy of an area brings about a strained situation and push and pull phenomena between ethnic groups. Ethnic conflicts are not because of the result of fading traditionalism in totality, nor are they a result of the persistence of long hauled antipathy or memories of antagonisms between ethnic groups. Because a lot of ethnic groups are of recent origin and still they are in conflict with other groups. The concept of "social mobilisation" as given by Karl W. Deutsch⁸⁵ (quoted in Horowitz, 1985, 100) says that it fosters ethnic competition especially in competitive modern sectors. While this concept talks about a growth of apprehension among the less significant ethnic groups, of the impending danger of the changes brought about by modernization, vis-à-vis the collective support of the urban elites to the forces of modernity

⁸⁴ Dahrendorf, Ralf. (June 1958). Toward a theory of social conflict. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*. Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 170-183

⁸⁵ Deutsch, Karl W. (Sept. 1961): 493-514, "Social mobilisation and political development," *American Political Science Review*.

so as to gain their position for getting benefits, we can also look into the dimension of the agency of the educated, economic and cultural elites; historically privileged ethnic groups or communities in trying to garner collective support of the people in bringing forth a consciousness among the masses, of the impending danger of waves of modernization in maintaining their long hold superior position in social hierarchy; in the field of economy, culture and others. Here Horowitz talks of the “envy, resentment and fear of those groups which seems to be benefiting unduly from modernization”. Looking at the context of the changing dynamics of Manipuri society and the ethnic relations between the Meitei and Pangals, perhaps a host of factors contributes to the growing apprehension among people with respect to maintaining their position in society, pertaining to not just the forces of modernization per se, but also to the effects of increasing competition upon scarce resources, areas of economic and cultural interests and in symbolic and strategic political areas. The symbolic interactionist tradition by Herbert Blumer⁸⁶ gives that strain in social and political relations among groups or individuals in a society are the precursor to a conflict. This strain refers to the formation of a gap between expectation and reality. This can be material based or through subjective relations. Blumer⁸⁷ maintains that in a society which is harmoniously maintained by its agents through interactions, controlled through self-consciousness and held together by social values and norms, strain induces it to break down when the societal expectations of and from the agents are not met with the reality and they appear to drift away. This strain in the system gives rise to *social unrest*. This is followed by an important behavioral shift which he refers to as *elementary behavior*.⁸⁸ This elementary behavior becomes the root for the expression of the instability and conflict. Now, in the context of conflict and violence, the basic question one should seek to answer is the causal factors or the agencies that leads to the rise of behavioral shift among people. This theory can be extended and connected to Horowitz’s opinion that the benefits of modernization are not equally distributed in a multi-ethnic society. Some groups tend to make a privilege position in taking gains out of the competition and in the same fashion ethnic boundaries are

⁸⁶ Blumer, Herbert. (1986). *Symbolic interactionism: perspective and method*, University of California Press. Pp. 86.

⁸⁷ Blumer, Herbert. (1969) *Collective behavior*, in principles of Sociology, edited by A.M. Lee. New York: Barnes and Noble. P. 67-121

⁸⁸ Crossley, Nick. 2002, *Making sense of social movements*, Buckingham, United Kingdom: Open University Press.

reinforced and maintained. This makes the ethnic boundary more prone to confrontations. Most often, the elites in the society tend to strike mass apprehensions, sentiments and aspirations in order to serve their own interests, upon which the non-elites tend to suffer from what Horowitz terms as 'false consciousness'. These men in power are often instrumental in pursuing a policy of deflecting mass antagonisms into other ethnic groups.⁸⁹

Ethnic conflict is also fostered by a long and consistent ethnic division of labour. Horowitz mentioned of the case of Muslim Bengali peasants in Naogong district of Assam, who had immigrated from Mymensingh (now in Bangladesh) both before independence and after independence of India in 1947. These Bangali Muslims are considered to be more hard working farmers and are proficient in better techniques of farming than the native Assamese. They only grow vegetables for commercial sale and are sold at higher price. Horowitz quotes Kusum Nair saying that the Bengalis follow a practice of selling their vegetables by carrying on their heads, that which the Assamese considered as incompatible with their 'dignity'. The same is true in the case of laborers in tea estates. This on the one hand becomes a basis for continuous ethnic division of labor.⁹⁰ While the division of labor may be a function of the existing economic condition of the state, subject to individual skill sets, availability of resources and favorable geographical location; in case of Manipur, the Pangals who were even given clan names basically based on their skill-sets, have over a period of time become a subject of stereotype, based on their skill-sets which in the society are considered to be of lower status, less economically productive. Manifestations of these kinds of stereotypes such as portraying of Muslim women as vegetable vendors, Muslim men as rickshaw puller in popular media such as films, have to an extent fostered a climate of hate. However this does not mean the Meiteis and other tribes are not indulging in such kinds of occupations. With increasing lack of opportunity, there has been a surge of competition over labor pools and perhaps more people from the Meitei community (not in percentage) have picked up different kinds of petty occupations that were once done by the Mayangs (outsiders) and Muslims. However stereotypes against the Muslims still persist. Horowitz maintains that the ethnic violence against Bangali Muslims of Assam in 1960, 1972, 1979-83, and other recent conflicts are mostly result of political resentment than

⁸⁹ Horowitz, (1985). *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. University of California Press. p. 25

⁹⁰ Op-cited, Horowitz, Donald L. (1985). P 112-113

economic resentment. This is because the Marwaris and not the Bengalis are the real controllers of Assam's wholesale trade, industry, rice mills, oil mills godowns and tea marketing.⁹¹ Motivations for ethnic conflicts at the mass level are not primarily economic. Beyond the pursuit of economic interests, conflicts may be the result of ethnic pluralism, leading to of a segmented labour market, thereby inhibiting the emergence of competitive rivalries⁹².

Another theory on the cause of ethnic conflict is in the area of cultural pluralism, where the basic question raises, if ethnic conflict is a product of meeting incompatible values. Though cultural differences are one of the differences that usually divide ethnic groups, we ought to question if the amount of cultural difference is directly proportionate to extent of ethnic conflict. Here, M. G. Smith (1965) formulates a theory wherein he speaks of a culturally plural society where "there is a co-existence within a single society of groups possessing 'mutually incompatible' institutional systems". The institutional systems include social structures, value and belief patterns, and system of actions. Smith maintains that in a culturally plural system, the groups' institutional systems tend to integrate internally forming closed socio-cultural units. This tends to form a common society with a political order in which one cultural order subordinates or dominates the others. This he contends leads to a society prone to dissensus, lack of shared value and absence of "common will". Thus cultural incompatibility of institutions and values becomes the major reason for instability that threatens the plural society.⁹³ This is similar to the concept of strain formation proposed by Herbert Blumer under symbolic interactionism. In the same fashion, Banton⁹⁴ maintains that large-scale conflicts between groups with multiple distinctive features provide a condition for the members of the groups to act collectively, leading to the formation of closed collective groups. Though the plural society theory of ethnic conflict by Smith provides an approach to identify certain variables that causes instability, it proves

⁹¹ Charu, Chandra Bhandari, *Thoughts on Assam Disturbances* (Rajghat, India : A.B. Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1961), 12-14, Quoted in Horowitz, Donald L (1985): p. 121, (op. cited)

⁹² Op cit. Horowitz, (1985): P. 134

⁹³ M.G. Smith, *The plural society of the British West Indies* (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965) quoted in Horowitz, Donald L. (1985) *Ethnic group in conflicts*, Pp. 136,137.

⁹⁴ Banton, Michael. *Ethnic Conflict*, Sociology, Vol. 34, No. 3 (August 2000), Pp. 481-498. Sage Publications, Ltd. Pp. 485

impractical in many ways, and precisely when it comes to defining conflict per se, relating to a community not in a group, but due to a particular section of a community.⁹⁵

Theoretical Narratives on Ethnic Violence

Arjun Appadurai, by taking into consideration, the context where rapid modernity has brought people a flux of uncertainty and conflicts with relation to identity and boundary management, maintains that “ethnic violence, as a form of collective violence, is partly a product of collective propaganda, rumor, prejudice and memory-all forms of knowledge and all usually associated with heightened conviction, conviction capable of producing inhuman degrees of violence”⁹⁶. In today’s contexts, Ingo W. Schroder and Bettina E. Schmidt⁹⁷ provides three forms of approach with which researchers study conflicts, wars and violence. These are:

1. The operational approach, focusing on the etics of antagonism, in particular on the measurable material and political causes of conflict;
2. The cognitive approach, focusing on the emics of the cultural construction of war in a given society;
3. The experiential approach that looks at violence as not necessarily confined to situations of intergroup conflict but as something related to individual subjectivity, something that structures people’s everyday lives, even in the absence of an actual state of war.”
(Bettina & Schroder, 2001. 1)

While the current study focuses on violence between two communities, however for reasons pertaining to multiplicities of concepts to be involved in making an effort to understand the phenomena, a particular approach will not suffice to provide a better understanding. Still this study will primarily bend on the evolutionary psychological approach of violence, relational

⁹⁵ Op-cited, Horowitz (1985): Pp. 139.

⁹⁶ Appadurai, Arjun. (1998). Dead Certainty: Ethnic Violence in the Era of Modernity, in *Public Culture* , 10(2): 225-247, Duke University Press.

⁹⁷ Schmidt, Bettina E. & Schroder, Ingo W. (ed.) (2001), *Anthropology of Violence and Conflict*. London and New York : Routledge Publications,. Pp. 1

approach proposed by Charles Tilly (2003) and most importantly the symbolic approach by Pierre Bourdieu (1992). These theoretical approaches use cognitive techniques to a large extent.

George Simmel looks at violence as a synchronic event, as a type of social relations between individuals and collectives, which serves specific ends at inter-group as well as intra-group levels. From a functional approach, Simmel views violent confrontations as “social actions relative to the interests of conscious actors” (cited in Schroder and Schmidt, ed. 2001, p. 1). Thus for Schroder and Schmidt, a violent act is often motivated by the strategically planning leaders or elites. They maintain that “motivation follows a specific cultural grammar that defines the value and relative importance of material and social benefits (honour, prestige etc.)”. They maintain that this cultural grammar provides a more permanent meaning to the violent confrontations, which offers motivational frameworks as well as incentives beyond the individual actor’s immediate interests⁹⁸.

Hannah Arendt⁹⁹ pointed out that in the 19th century; violence was often been perceived or defined in the language of a means to an end. She gave the example of Clausewitz calling war as “the continuation of politics by other means” and Engels defining violence as “the accelerator of economic development”. She opined that the if goals are not met quickly or rapidly achieved after violence, the result will not only be defeat of the violent act, but rather it will also introduce a practice of violence into the whole body politic.

To understand the substance of a particular incident of violence, we need to need to approach the particular context upon which the violence occurs through multiple theoretical approaches. Important parameters which should be looked into, but not limited to are the form and substance of the violence, its origin, its relation to other incidents of violence, to the existing social and political condition and to the substance and pattern that follows if there exist. Alvarez and Bachman¹⁰⁰ maintain that despite differences in the behavior of individual dynamics in an act of violence, violent acts share a number of essential

⁹⁸ Op cited, Schmidt, Bettina E. & Schroder, Ingo W. (ed.) (2001), Pp. 5

⁹⁹ Arendt, Hannah (1969, 1970). *On Violence*. New York & London: A Harvest/HBJ Book, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers. San Deigo. Pp. 8-9

¹⁰⁰ Op. cit. Alvarez & Bachman. (2008). pp. 2

characteristics which constitute the unity of human aggression. One important characteristic worth looking in their analysis is the idea of commonality of perception and motivation in the incidences of violence. This can be linked to the symbolic interactionist perspective of a ‘collective behavior’ that forms the common psyche of people involved in a violent act. On the other hand Alvarex and Bachman¹⁰¹ maintain that etiological and biological explanation of theory of violence provides wisdom on the evolution of human society, where in violent behavior has always proved necessary for survival, because it helps in keeping a check and balance mechanism to problems needed for staying alive. The logic of this explanation revolves around the notion of maintaining status and dominance. Though the biological and etiological approaches may not have a complete explanation for all forms of violence, most ethnic and collective violence of the present world have their initial roots in the biological concept of competition. Thus Spielmann (1991, p. 17) says, “Competition occurs when two or more individuals, populations, or species simultaneously use a resource that is actually or potentially limiting” (Schmidt & Schroder, 2001, p. 2).

In the process of studying collective violence, one ought to see if there is a pattern in the collective psyche of people using violence as a long-term or short-term strategy to maintain an influence over another group, in the process of competition over scarce resources. On the other hand we also need to see the dynamics of the collective behavior of the party involved in violence and of the whole society. Abbink¹⁰² maintains that the winning party in a collective violence or the party that has the potential to influence symbolic power over the opposite party gets adaptive benefits from the violence they lease. This, he maintains is instrumental in shaping the group’s psychological proneness to the use of force in the evolutionary process.¹⁰³ His study of violence between the Dizi-Suri pastoral tribes of Ethiopia provides a dimension on cultural production of violence using evolutionary psychology as the theoretical backbone. He emphasizes on the evolution of human behavior, in terms of the changes in form and usage of violence amongst the Suri and Dizi tribes of Ethiopia. The evolution is traced in the transformation of once culturally approved ritual

¹⁰¹ *ibid.* Pp. 30

¹⁰² Abbink, Jon. Violence and culture: anthropological and evolutionary-psychological reflections on inter-group conflict in southern Ethiopia, Pp. (123-143) in Schmidt, Bettina E. & Schroder, Ingo W. (ed.) (2001), *Anthropology of Violence and Conflict*. London and New York: Routledge Publications.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*, Pp. 123-143

violence into a new form of real, unmediated, direct violence. Abbink attributes this crisis and violence to rapid social changes, reinforced by technological and other necessary supports made available by modernity. With limited natural resources, complicated by issues of influx of refugees, the natural settlers of the area were in a flux of problems and apprehensions, leading to more stress in ethnic relations and boundary management. With a section of society (particular age grade) having equipped with new forms of economic and social capital, they have started equipping themselves with sophisticated automatic weapons. Abbink maintains, this drastic change gave way to fundamental behavioral changes among people leading to de-ritualisation of the traditional forms of violence and taking up new real violence. This is very much similar to the culturally approved forms of violence among various tribe of North East India. e.g. the hill tribes like Nagas and the valley dwelling Meitei Kings used to once practice head hunting (Piang, 2015, p. 164; Hodson. T.C. 1908, p. 94). This was almost a culturally approved form of violence. Hodson accounted that prior to the introduction of Hinduism; the Meiteis were in the habit of bringing in the heads of defeated enemies as trophies of prowess. However in both the cases, this once culturally approved form of violence has of late been de-ritualized and new forms of violence have been brought up, which are brought about by rapid changes of social and political conditions and technologically enhanced inputs.

Most ethnic violence is collective in nature. Charles Tilly¹⁰⁴ defines collective violence as an episodic social interaction that immediately inflicts physical damage on persons and/or objects, which involves at least two perpetrators of damage and that result at least in part from coordination among persons who perform the damaging acts. Tilly makes an important observation that violence and politics are always associated. He argues that key principles connect political life and collective violence along ‘relational lines’¹⁰⁵. On the other hand Tilly argues that the causal processes and mechanisms of various types of collective violence are similar (Tilly, 2003, p. 4). Keeping this important argument of Tilly in terms of the sharing mechanisms of collective violence, we can connect with the evolutionary

¹⁰⁴ Tilly, Charles. (2003), *The politics of collective violence*. Cambridge, UK :Cambridge University Press

¹⁰⁵ Strozier, Charles B. Review of *The politics of collective violence* by Tilly, Charles, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Volume 35, Number 4, Spring 2005, pp. 623-624 (Review)

psychological and symbolic interactionist explanation of violence, of how similar mechanism and patterns gets evolved into a collective behavioral trait over a period of time.

Another important approach to understand the concept of violence is through the concept of symbolic power and violence by Bourdieu¹⁰⁶. Bourdieu views a stratified social world of hierarchies of individual, groups and institutions. He maintains that competitions and conflicts pervades through these hierarchies and through the dynamics of power relations controlled and reproduced by those who maintain better capital and position in the society. This system he says is reproduced inter-generationally without the conscious recognition of its members.¹⁰⁷ Extending Weber's theory of legitimization, Bourdieu contends that an order is maintained in the society through a deeply held misrecognition of a legitimation process that is arbitrary in nature.¹⁰⁸ Here the concept of 'symbolic violence refers to the internalized effects of symbolic power that distort identity by encouraging the dominated to accept the conditions of domination as legitimate'¹⁰⁹. This will be discussed further along with the context of enquiry. Swartz (2013) maintains that in the process of imparting symbolic violence, the effects of symbolic power are unconscious and resistant to conscious articulation and critical reflection.¹¹⁰

Ethnic Relationships and the Genealogy of Conflicts between the Meitei and Pangals

The basic approach to study ethnic violence between the two communities, the parent ethnic group, Meitei and the sub-ethnic group, Pangal is to look into the ethnic relationships, boundary management and the nature and pattern of changes taking place between the two over a period of time. This should go into looking at the critical systematic variables which explains the phenomena of violence. More often than not ethnic violence happens as a consequence of unstable boundary relations and politics of symbolic power between ethnic groups. Perhaps an important question that intrigues us is, if any elements of a community's

¹⁰⁶ Bourdieu, Pierre, Translated by Nice, Richard (1992). *The Logic of Practice*, Stanford University Press, Pp. 123-134.

¹⁰⁷ Swartz, David L. (2013). *Symbolic Power, Politics and Intellectuals*,. Chicago and London : The University of Chicago Press.. pp. 79

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. pp. 81, Op. Cit. , Bourdieu, Pierre (1992):P 133.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. pp. 84.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. pp. 89

identity and their associated relationships with other groups help in stimulating violence? On the other hand an enquiry can be made if any trend of violence in the society is instrumental in impelling bifurcation between ethnic groups or communities. A history of the relationship between the two communities and the trend of changes taking place inside the society of each communities and with respect to cultural, social and political milieu around can help us understand the phenomena of conflict and violence between the two communities.

Historical accounts of the settlement of Muslims in Manipur and the creation of the Pangal identity was primarily based on the basic processes of ethnic identity formation of a community i.e, classification, identification and categorization, as proposed by Fredrik Barth. The processes of identification and categorization, based on the skill-sets, place or origin or other parameters deemed fit, were utilized by the king of Manipur in giving *sagei* (clan) names to the immigrant Muslims. The evolution of the Pangal identity can be viewed using this Barthian understanding of self identification and classification of (and by) others. It is an established fact that the Muslim immigrants in Manipur were extended a very generous treatment by the King Khagemba and his subjects (Irene, 2010. Pp. 31). A. Rahman¹¹¹ maintains that ‘the Muslims regarded Manipur as their own country of permanent abode from which they did not turn their eyes away’ (1997, 1). This indicates the cordial nature of relationships the two communities had at the outset. The acknowledgement of the Islamic faith of the immigrant Muslims, and the absence of any influence in one another’s religious affairs (ibid. Pp. 31), signifies the reciprocity and respect in relationships. This reciprocal relationship can be seen at various levels ranging from mutual respects of identity, dedication and service for the kingdom, to cultural exchanges.

As Richard Jenkins¹¹² says, the dialectical process of group identification and social categorization based on identity traits can be figured out through the various relational transactions between the Meitei and Pangal community. From the formation of a community

¹¹¹ Rahman, A. (1997). The culture of Manipur Muslim (Pangals) and Meitei influences. In *Meitei Pangal cultural festival and exhibition, diamond jubilee celebration of the Aryan Theatre. (1935-1995)*, Organized on 28th and 29th December. p. 1

¹¹² Jenkins, Richard. (2000). ‘*The limits of identity: ethnicity, conflict and politics*’, Sheffield Online Papers in Social Research, no. 2

Url: <http://www.shef.ac.uk/uni/academic/R-Z/socst/Shop/2.html> visited on 26/5/2017

by establishing a kinship relation with the ethnic Meitei community, the Pangals have always shown their rootedness to the land in social, political and cultural aspects of life, until recently when myriad of factors have brought about changes to the dynamics of ethnic boundary management and relations between the two communities. Just as Amartya Sen says, “A sense of identity can be a source not only of pride and joy, but also of strength and confidence”(Sen, 2006, p. 1); from adopting *Meiteilon* (mother tongue of the Meiteis when the Muslim immigrants arrived) as their mother tongue, to getting dissolved to a large extent into the traditional way of life of the natives, including food habits, use of traditional attire, practice of social mores, legends, manners, customs etc., the Pangals have developed a primordial association with the land. On the other hand, Muslims’ way of life in terms of prayer, marriage ceremony, peculiar way of eating and dressing, manners and customs have not injured the Meitei society and have never produced unhealthy relations with the Meiteis.¹¹³

Reciprocal relations could be seen in the way how the secular treatment of the Meitei King was acknowledged by the newly formed community through discharge of selfless service to the kingdom as any other bonafide subjects of the kingdom. Thus, while the Muslims were given separate department known as *Mangkanshang*¹¹⁴ from 1606 to 1791 A.D., which was later substituted by the *Pangal Shanglen* also known as *Khabam Sanglen*, which was headed by a Kazi and was meant only to look after the administrative affairs of the Muslims (Pangals); the Pangals had also rendered all kinds of voluntary and mandatory services for the Kingdom. Exchanges of cultural traits had developed syncretistic forms of culture to a large extent, except in the religious arena, where the Islamic practice has never shown any dilutions through seepage of any Meitei elements¹¹⁵. The immigrant Muslims’ introduction of new agricultural techniques, (Sharma 2010, p. 27 & 28; Shah, 2008, p. 134) vegetable gardening, (Sharma, 2010, p. 27 & 28) salt making (Irene, 2010, p. 32) and other different skill-sets have enriched the cultural landscape of the area. On the other hand, the Pangals’ active participation in fighting against the colonial British, against the Burmese Empire and

¹¹³ Op-cited, Rahman, Pp. 1

¹¹⁴ Khan, Hakim Shah Khullakpam, 2008. *The Manipur governance to the Meitei-Pangal(Manipuri Muslims)*. Imphal: Pearl Education. p. 196-204

¹¹⁵ Op cit. Syed, Feroja.(2007).. Pp. 5

rough tribes, in the two famous women's uprisings (Nupi Lan-I,1904 and Nupi-Lan-II,1939), and last but not the least the inclusion of a Muslim representative, Maulavi Bashir-Uddin Ahmed in the first Manipur State Constitution Making Committee of 1947 as well as in the Interim Council formed on 15th August 1947¹¹⁶. The separate allocation of three reserved assembly seats for the Pangals in the Manipur State Assembly Election, 1948¹¹⁷ all tells the association of the Pangals with the land in bone and flesh. They have been referred to as 'naturalized people' following the religion Islam in Manipur (Ghosh and Ghosh, 1997; Syed, 2007. p. 27). On the other hand, Pangals are referred to as "the self conscious people who have a sense of dignity and believe in coexistence with other cultures without being overtaken by others"¹¹⁸. However in the last few decades, the dynamics of relationship have changed to an extent, bringing unprecedented changes in the ethnic relationship and boundary management. From the unprecedented violence of May 3, 1993 followed by a series of violent incidents, the relations have worsened of late. Certain structural changes and symbolic exercise of position, power and privilege can be observed which could have contributed to the expanding ethnic cleavage. This will be explained in detailed in the next chapter. The genealogy of conflict and violence between the two communities can be mapped out, if not exclusively, by discussing certain variables of social and political dynamics.

Is it Identity Evoking Violence or Violence Impelling Identities for a Difference?

Amartya Sen¹¹⁹ maintains, "Violence is fomented by the imposition of singular and belligerent identities on gullible people, championed by proficient artisans of terror". This statement of Sen opens our thoughts to a sea of dimensions, of looking at the causality of violence, where an instrumental function for a means to an end is being utilized by certain champions of terror, all in the name of identity. Jacoby (2008, p. 103), quoting Aristotle, maintains that in the wake of modernization and development, disparity between satisfaction and human needs can be seen as an important cause of grievance formation, collective

¹¹⁶ Op. cited. Shah, 2008. P. 265-266.

¹¹⁷ Op-cit, Shah. 2008: P.271

¹¹⁸ Socio-Economic survey of Manipuri Muslims, *op.cit.*, p.2 & Syed, Feroja, 2007. P. 27

¹¹⁹ Op-cited, Sen, Amartya.(2006), pp. 2

frustration and conflict. Violence as well as the conflict that cause violence is said to be nomothetic and never idiosyncratic in nature. In the study of the dynamics of conflict and violence between two communities, it is imperative for us to look at the narrative and trend of the competitive relationship, and for that matter the product of historical process of conflicting relationships that may be located in time and space. The rise of ethnic assertions, uprisings based on identity consciousness and movements for self determination has increased manifold, precisely in the post colonial period and more so among the less prominent groups and denied identities, and ethnic and religious minorities across the world. In the last few decades Manipur has been impacted by a variety of socio-cultural and political developments which are worth discussing in studying the conflicts between the Pangals and Meiteis. Different factors contribute to the apprehensions of people in the valleys as well as hills regarding the state's as well as the community's limited resources. This leads to competition because of the objective material condition. This is also precisely the reason of recreating or re-imagining social collectivities and to redraw and strengthen social boundaries. In fact in the present Manipur, basically three forms of waves are sweeping across the landscape of this once pristine land. With globalisation and the coming of neo-liberal economy, rapid changes have taken place in terms of marketization of economy through a fast moving and over encompassing capitalistic mode of production and distribution, causing inequalities among the people. There is almost free movement of people and goods from across the boundaries. Migrations of people, internal as well as from across the international boundary have put a strain to the limited resource of the state. Along with these movements modern forms of communication have helped in rapid importation and exchange of cultural traits. This has in-fact threatened the economy and culture the small natural inhabitants of the state. These were the basic reason, besides the political reasons mentioned in the previous part, for the rise of ethnic assertions, politics of recognition and redistribution.

Amartya Sen maintains that the idea of unique identity itself carries a notion of excluding other entities as non-members and that exactly is the reason for cultivation of violence among people. He pitched for recognizing from the vast array of categories and categorization of identities; the humanitarian concept of looking for a common and plural

identity, which in the collage of different entities, holds together with a common identity¹²⁰. On the other hand he maintains that, the sense of identity can improve strength and cultivate warmth in relationships with others. Nancy Fraser¹²¹ however attributes for the growing ethnic uprisings to not only assertion of identities, but also to bring about a lateral dimension of social justice and over redistribution of wealth and power. Fraser's idea is bent upon the concept that human society, precisely in a multicultural, multi-religious and multi-ethnic society, the entities are not horizontally spread; however it is a vertical construct of hierarchically structured society. This is where we ought to question, if the social relations in a society brought about by groups asserting for a distinct identity, self determination or recognition brings elements of violence? Or is it because in a lasting hierarchical social structure with conflicting play of symbolic power and dominance, those identities carve for difference? It is in the latter case where dimensions of symbolic power and violence play active part. One thing worth mentioning here is the probable link between identity and the causes of violence.

While the above mentioned conditions for the rise of apprehensions among the masses applies to all the native inhabitants of the state, it is maintained that the rapid growth of Muslim population (1961-1991, almost doubled) due to influx from outside was considered by the Meiteis as an important factor for the economic backwardness in the state, and hence it is seen as a threat not only to the unique identity and culture but also to their economy¹²². Besides this factor, the other factors include restoring the lost cultural heritage to the destruction happened during the time of King Baghyachandra, and the overt degradation of traditional cultural values from that time on, have prompted the Meitei revivalists, fundamentalists and cultural icons among others to aggressively assert for a change¹²³. The structural intimidation of the Pangals under fundamentalist organizations like Poramlen Apunba founded by Shri N. Bisheshwor Singh in 1988¹²⁴, besides working for bringing a cultural revivalism amongst the Meitei society, had in-fact taken an assertive task of misrecognition of the Pangals with a negative gaze, creating enclaves between the two

¹²⁰ Op-cit. Sen, Amartya. (2006), Pp. 16

¹²¹ Fraser, Nancy, Rethinking Recognition. *New Left Review* 3, May-June 2000.

¹²² Op- cit. Syed, Feroja, (2007) Pp 69-70

¹²³ Singh, Khuraijam Bijoykumar. (2005). *Sanamahi movement among the Meiteis of Manipur: A sociological study of a socio-religious movement*. Ph.D Thesis submitted to JNU. P. ii.

¹²⁴ Op-cit. Syed, Feroja, (2007) p. 62-63

communities. This led to reification of groups based on identity, encouraging among the Meiteis a repressive sense of chauvinism, intolerance and authoritarianism. This was perhaps the phase of structural fomentation of hatred among the masses, which later led to violence. This will be later discussed in the next chapter.

The assertion for a unique identity among the Pangals and the exercise of politics of recognition and redistribution had in-fact started after the 1993 communal violence. The rise of identity consciousness among the Pangals includes political, economic and ideological factors, besides homogenization and islamization process among others. Feroja Syed (2007) traced the identity consciousness and the quest for a unique identity among the Pangals by attributing mostly to relative deprivation, the presence of an apprehension and fear psychosis of being subjugated after the communal clash of 1993, and to the relative changes taking place in terms of mobility and development amongst other communities. Moreover the direct and indirect causes of the communal violence between the two communities have been attributed largely to the growth of ethnic consciousness and identity consolidation among the Meities and Pangals. In the case of the Pangals, the pursuance for recognition was mainly based on the economic health and social status of the community. The findings of Reports on Socio-Economic Survey of the Meitei Pangals in 2004 conducted under the Ministry of Minority and Backward Classes assisted in the assertion and demand for a correction plan to bring distributive justice through proportionate representation from the Meitei-Pangal community, in social, cultural and economic aspects of life. Based on the findings of the survey, which showed a dismal position of the Pangals in almost all parameters of socio-economic indicators and the historical negligence on the part of the establishment in ensuing equal welfare amongst the Meitei-Pangal community, vis-à-vis the other communities; actions were taken ensuring a reserved quota for the community in jobs and education.

The inclusion of the Pangals as Other Backward Class (OBC) under the category Meitei-Pangal on 5th September, 1994 marked the legitimation of an identity that ensures a mechanism to bring some structural changes to the socio-economic conditions of the community. However despite necessary measures taken from the side of the state as well as the from the Pangal community in ensuring recognition from the significant others with

regard to the community's cultural values and ethos associated with the land; as well as to earn a respectable status in the society; intermittent violence between the two communities based on hatred feelings and prejudice still keeps erupting. In-fact it has rather increased over a period of time. This not only puts us to doubt over the process of mediation, reconciliation and peace building mechanisms employed by the state as well as the civil societies after the violent incident of May 1993, but it also takes our curiosity over the kind of, and the changes in ethnic relations and boundary management between the two communities. This takes us to other dimension of looking at the historicity of misrecognition, negative aspects of the politics of recognition and other related factors.

The misrecognition of the Pangals has again political, economic and ideological causal explanations. Fraser¹²⁵ maintains that, "To be denied recognition- or to be 'misrecognized'- is to suffer both a distortion of one's relation to one's self and an injury to one's identity". Misrecognition is the process where the minor culture suffers devaluation and distortion of one's relation one's self, in the hands of the dominant culture. Thus Fraser maintains that misrecognition prevents the minor culture from developing a healthy cultural identity of their own, owing to repeated encounters with the stigmatizing gaze of the culturally dominant group. The process of misrecognition in the case of the Pangals can be looked at different factors and at different dimensions of culture and identity. This includes attitudes, thoughts, perceptions and stereotypes at a primary level and the dimension of denying the avenues of social mobility and become a full partner in social interaction at another level. The structured pattern of devaluation and the dimensions of symbolic power and legitimization processes will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. However what are more important is to study the changes taking place in everyday life, in the process of pursuing the politics of recognition.

Before the sudden outbreak of an unprecedented violence on 3rd May 1993, the society of Manipur had already experienced waves of different social and cultural changes bringing strain to the traditional relations among the communities. Perhaps few of these changes could have contributed in bringing about changes in ethnic relations and conflict between

¹²⁵ Op-cited, Fraser (2000), p. 3/7.

Meitei and Pangals. Bijoy¹²⁶ in his thesis, *Sanamahi Movement among the Miteis of Manipur* gives a historicity and origin of the Meitei's hatred against the Pangals. One legacy of the hatred of the Meiteis against the Pangals has been given to be a direct cause of the Hinduisation. After the fall of Manipur in the hands of the Burmese during *Chahi Taret Khuntakpa* (Seven Years Devastation 1819-1826)¹²⁷, majority of the Manipuris including the King had migrated to other parts of India including Cachar, Bengal and Tripura. This was indeed the time when the Meiteis who had been exposed to Hinduism to an extent had got maximum exposure to the religion directly from people who follow Hinduism. While the religious orthodoxy and cultural traits imbibed during the short stay outside Manipur was introduced in Manipur with new vigor, it had also brought in negative impacts of hatred against the Muslims; a historically and culturally constructed behavioral trait existed in other parts of India. The Pangals who were an integral part of the Manipuri Identity had started to be treated as 'others' and also as a polluted community. He maintains that the 1993 communal violence was a manifestation or a product of the root of dichotomization and hatred feeling hatched then, long time back.

On the other hand the Pangals also had imbibed substantial amount of religious and cultural traits which was manifested in their socio-religious life in the times that followed. Shah (2008, p. 60) mentions that Habibullah Moijingmayum of Thoubal Moijing village, the *Shanglakpa* during King Marjit's reign, was one of the Meitei Pangal who had re-strengthened the community for Islamic education in Cachar during the Seven Years Devastation. Though religious revivalism and consolidation of faith had started at the later part of the 19th century and early 20th century, the Seven Years Devastation might have given the Pangals enough impetus to change in their outlook towards their self and others. Bijoy maintains that a new dimension of identification with reference to the mainland culture had started. Though this may be just one dimension to look at the historical linkage of the cause of antagonism between the two communities, it is significant precisely because it gives us a way to understand the evolution of the schema of thoughts and prejudice

¹²⁶ Op-Cit. Singh, Khuraijam Bijoykumar. (2005) p. 104

¹²⁷ Seven Years Devastation 1819-1826 A.D. The occupation of Manipur by the Burmese king under the general Mingimala Bandula. Most Manipuris including the King Marjit fled to Cachar, Tripura, Bangladesh and other safe areas. Thousands of people were killed and thousands were carried away to Burma. This oppression under the Burmese led to the valley areas of Manipur looked deserted. Manipur was later freed by Gambhir Singh in the 1st Anglo-Burmese War in 1825. (Shah, 2008: 60).

developed over a period of time. Moreover the creation of boundaries between communities, based on a cultural concept which was unknown to the Manipuris was another significant point. However the structural and political factors developed during the later part of the 20th century have more causal relation with the conflicts and violence that proceeds.

The reification of groups based on religious and political underpinnings is another outcome of misrecognition creating enclaves among the two communities. Classification and identification are two dialectical processes that go in tandem when it comes to the recognition of an ethnic group. “In the Balkans, the name ‘Muslim’ can designate a group that is more ethnic than religious”¹²⁸. In a similar manner, the word ‘Pangal’ perhaps have become more religious than ethnic. The manner of its usage, sometimes gives more weightage to religious connotation, which are expressed through the medium of culturally associated stereotype, sarcasm and prejudice than the real significance it carries in literal ethnical sense. Banton¹²⁹ maintains that the decision to recognize a group by a particular name is a political action.

Some Pangal scholars feel that ‘Pangals’ are a unique ethnic identity¹³⁰. The classification of the Muslim community as a subset of the umbrella term Meitei is being refuted as a part of an assimilative political move. However the state officially assigns the term ‘Meitei-Pangal’ for the Muslim community, giving it a sub-ethnic category of the ethnic group ‘Meitei’, perhaps indicating the close kinship relation and history of cultural baggage associated with the Meiteis. This gives another avenue to look at the dichotomy and conflict that exist in the identification and classification of one’s identity. Sen maintains that “our freedom to assert our personal identities can sometimes be extraordinarily limited in the eyes of others, no matter how we see ourselves”¹³¹. This is similar to Tajfel’s idea that the concept of identity asserted or identified by one has to be confirmed and consistently acknowledged by the significant others.¹³² Giving his ideas on forced attribution of identity by an outside entity, a case of misrepresentation, Sen says, “removal is challenging enough, but no less radical is

¹²⁸ Banton, Michael. Ethnic Conflict, *Sociology*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (August 2000), pp. 481-498. Sage Publications, Ltd. P. 483

¹²⁹ Ibid, p. 483

¹³⁰ Op. cit Ahmed, Shakil (2011)

¹³¹ Sen, Op-Cit. p. 6.

¹³² Tajfel, Henry (1984). *The Social Dimension, Volume II*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p .329

the surgical implantation of a ‘real me’ by other who are determined to make us different from what we think we are.” Giving his wisdom on the agency of choice for a person to determine the priorities for affiliations and associations for a person to be self identified as belonging to a particular entity, should, he says one should value, defend and recognize. He is of the opinion that unquestioned acceptance of one’s imposed identity, or a discovery of one’s self identity conditioned by some imposing forces is one basic reason for fomenting violence (Barth, 1969). Now in a similar line of argument, Barth¹³³ maintained that identification of ethnic identity should be rather centered on socio-cultural practices that serve important boundary markers, differentiating a group from other. So when the Pangals have increasingly taken the route of religion to consolidate their identity, the Meiteis have also increasingly tried to consolidate their ethnic identity through primordial means of religious and cultural revivalism. Despite the political significance which might provide the groups as an end, this development leads to a tacit dichotomization of ‘us and them’ between the two communities. This theoretical explanation gives us an insight of how misrepresentation of one’s identity through stereotype, misconceptions and politically motivated or socio-culturally structured classification process could lead to creation of conflicts among two communities.

¹³³ Barth, Fredrik (1969). (Eds.) *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*. London: George Allen and Unwin.

Chapter III

Nature and Pattern of Conflicts and Violence between the Meiteis and Meitei-Pangals: An Analysis

In the long history of settlement of the Pangals in Manipur, there was no significant historically recorded incidence of collective violence involving a clash between the Meitei and Pangal Community till 1993. However as per M. M. Shah, the first case of violence of political conspiracy, where Pangals were involved was that of Palace Revolt of 1702 A.D. during the reign of King Charairongba (1697-1709 A.D), in a bid to attack the King and overthrow him, Ibungo Loiyumba, the king's brother and his party torched six palace huts and the people inside them were forced to run out. Later the perpetrators, Syed or Merai Ngangba, the Quazi-ul-Qazat of the Mankanshang and Pangal Shakom (Shah Kusum), Naoshamcha Pukhramba, Angom Lanhang and Pangal Hongba were tried in the Top Garod, presided over by the Senapati and sentenced to death (Sharma, B Kullachandra, 2010, p. 68; Irene, 2010, p. 198; Shah, 2008, p. 102). It was also a high level case, related to state formation and dissolution, where Pangals were involved, though not singlehandedly, to lease violence against the Meitei King. The Pangals relation with the Miteis across various social variables including religion, marriage, and other aspects of social and political life, had for a long time, manifested a cordial co-habitation based on mutual respect, reciprocity and exchange of cultural traits. Syncretistic forms of culture were developed in various aspects of Pangals way of life, through cultural fusion and exchange with the Meitei society.

Incidences and trends of Violence:

On 3rd May, 1993, the infamous violent riots¹³⁴ between the Meitei and Pangals had rocked the foundations of the long peaceful co-existence between the two communities. This has been followed by a series of violent confrontations time and again, until recently when a new dimension of communally frenzied incidents of mob violence has worsened the condition. The unfortunate incident of 3rd May, 1993, started in the middle of the valley of

¹³⁴ Singh, Mangi (2008). A case study of the May 1993 riot victims of Purum Pangaltabi in *Blisters on their feet: tales of internally displaced persons in India's Northeast*.(eds). Edited by Samir Kumar Das. Sage Publications, India

Manipur, from a small brawl between men belonging to Meitei and Muslim community followed by a wild wave of rumour. Ironically the riots broke out a day after the then Chief Minister R.K. Dorendra Singh led a rally of peace and harmony from Imphal. It has been established that some members of the newly formed People's Republican Army (PRA), a newly formed armed militant group in the valley, had a deal with an arms dealer, Md. Adon/Adonbi of Lilong Haoreibi Awang Leikai in April, 1993. On the failure to supply the arm, three men of PRA went to collect their money. When Adon failed to repay the money the three men tried to carry away a Yamaha motor bike which was parked at Adon's house. This made Adon to make an alarm that his motorbike has been snatched. People around who heard the cry surrounded the men and they were beaten up (Huiyen Lanpao, 3 May 1993, p. 1; Singh, 2008, p. 216). They were later arrested by the security guard of Md. Hellaluddin, the then Fisheries Minister and a representative from the same location. There are also accounts that the SDPO/Imphal, John S. Shilshi had come to the spot and explained to the crowd about the three men's association to PRA. The next day, the PRA men spread wild rumours to the Meitei population that Meitei students including girls in large numbers have been detained and beaten up at Lilong Haoreibi College area, when they had gone to pick up admit cards for examination. There were also rumors that Meitei girls were raped by the Muslims. The fission pattern of assault on Muslims started when PRA men assaulted Muslims indiscriminately across the Imphal Municipality area and the outskirts. Soon the violence spread across all valley districts and in most Muslim-inhabited areas. This sparked the unprecedented communal clash between the majority Meitei community and the minority Muslim (Pangal) community, inhabiting the plain area of Manipur. This had been the biggest inter community clash between communities in the valley in contemporary Manipur.

The immediate effect of the riot was the death of 100 persons and 149 injured as per official records (Tarapot, 2003, p. 220; Justice DM Sen Report, 2007). One hundred and one cases were registered by the police and 423 persons arrested in connection with the incident. Many houses belonging to Muslim community were burned down in few villages. Many remote Muslim villages bore a deserted look as people had to flee to safer areas. Schools and markets were shut down for few days and normal day to day business was hit severely.

Singh (2008, 217) gives a figure of the number of affected population and the number of houses as shown in the Table 1 below.

Record of the Affected Victims of May Riot 1993

Sl. No.	Name of Village	No. of Houses	Total Population
1	Shamushang Shantipur (Paobitek) Village	53	310
2	Kiyamgei Village	7	47
3	Sunulok (Thamnapokpi) Village	38	47
4	Kambongbut Village	11	71
5	Purum Pangaltabi Village	60	325
6	Lamphel Khuningthek Village	18	103
7	Haotal Village (Thangjam Khunnou)	6	36
8	Sugnu Village	1	4
9	Kanglatongbi Village	2	10
Total	9 Villages	196 Households	1,144 Population

Source: S. Mangi Singh, (2008): A Case Study of the May 1993 Riot Victims of Purum Pangaltabi

After the May 1993 incident, the Government of Manipur appointed on 30th September, 1993 Justice D.M. Sen Commission of Inquiry, to inquire into the causes and circumstances leading to the incidents of 3rd May, 1993 and to ascertain the persons/parties responsible for the incidents or killing of innocent persons and destruction of properties, among others. The report mentions three incidents of conflicts that happened before the 1993 incident. The Commission report also mentions of conflicts related to issues of land and religious beliefs. Of the recommendations made by the Commission, among others which are mainly related to the need of keeping in place an active control mechanism, includes a very important observation, no. (I)-

- I) The Commission found that the state of complacency arising out of the peace, amity and friendship between Meeteis and Pangal during several centuries was misplaced. There is no limit to the liability of a semi literate population to be

influenced by the assurances and suggestions of religious fanatics or political agitators or to be disturbed by interference with its prejudices and beliefs.¹³⁵

Since the incident of May 1993, it has been observed that three different types of conflicts and violence between the Meiteis and Pangals have happened in the last 24 years. A systematic observation of the patterns of conflicts and violence give us three forms: 1) Conflicts and associated violence linked with religious beliefs and issues of sacred sites 2) Conflicts and violence based on hate and intimidation 3) Mob violence and Lynching.

Brubaker's¹³⁶ cognitive turns in the study of ethnic violence provides an apt mechanism that can give us a better understanding of the phenomena by using a mixture of different approaches..

(a) Inductive work at various levels of aggregation seeks to identify the patterns, mechanisms, and recurrent processes implicated in ethnic violence.

(b) Theory-driven work employs models of rational action drawn from international relations theory, game theory, and general rational action theory.

(c) Culturalist work highlights the discursive, symbolic, and ritualistic aspects of ethnic violence

Conflicts and Associated Violence Linked with Religious Beliefs and Issues of Sacred Sites

Of the three forms of conflicts and violence that have been observed, the most important is that of conflicts associated to religious beliefs and issues of sacred sites. Owing to an increasing apprehension among the Meiteis of an impending danger of losing their distinct identity, belief system and position in a land primarily of their own civilization, and owing to the increasing social-economic, political and cultural impacts brought by variety of factors including Hinduisation, colonization, independence, migration etc.; the later part of

¹³⁵ Justice Sen, D.M. 2007. Report of Justice D.M. Sen Commission of Enquiry: Incidents of the Group Clashes in Manipur During May, 1993. In *The Commission of Inquiry on Communal Riots*, P. 78

¹³⁶ Op-cit, Brubakers, Rogers. Et. al (2004)

the 20th century has shown different forms of reform movements and assertions either in new forms or strengthening a previously existing one e.g, ‘Meitei Marup’, ‘Lainingthou Sanamahi Thougol Marup’, ‘Meitei National Front’, ‘HERICOUN (The Ethno Heritage Council), ‘UFO’¹³⁷ etc.. The Sanamahi Movement is one such Revivalist Movement, which works for safeguarding the traditional culture and belief system of the Meitei society on the one side and also to pursue for a “political space defined by identity and history-a space also free from the influences of the outsiders”¹³⁸. Of late we have seen the growth of organizations that resorts to activities which do not go down well with the existing social reality and which could create a tremendous gap between the communities. Poramlan Apunba is one such organization which took up the cause of Meitei Revivalism through activities including the identification and revival of ancient religious sites which are considered to be significant to Meitei religious belief system¹³⁹. There is another fundamentalist Meitei organisation which claims to be a cultural organisation with the objective of safeguarding the Meitei culture is (Universal Friendship Organisation)UFO¹⁴⁰, formerly known as SAJAL. Their activities have of late under the lens of the government and to the suspicion of the public. The seeming evolution of this organisation, which started in the 1930s to learn and preserve Meitei martial arts have mysteriously started professing about self determination. Presence of extreme prejudiced on religious borders and fanatic ideas have been observed (Arambam, Kapil).¹⁴¹ However association of radical approach on certain sites which have conflicting claims between communities led to tensions, precisely between the Meitei and Pangals.

This ongoing process of identification and revival of Meitei’s ancient religious sites can be understood through Mercea Eliade’s concept of heirophany, a process of sacralization of an object of space, of claiming the sacred and abolishing the profane, through injunction of

¹³⁷ Singh, Khuraijam Bijoykumar (2005). p. 230.

¹³⁸ Op Cited p. 229

¹³⁹ Syed, Feroja(2007), Religion, ethnic identity and the state: P. 63.

¹⁴⁰ UFO formerly known as SATJAL.The organisation was established in 1934 by R.K. Guneswar Singh. His aim was to set up academies for traditional Manipuri martial arts. The organisation changed its name to Scientific Defence and Cultural Society in 1967. It was renamed UFO in July 2003. , The Telegraph, Calcutta, Saturday, February 11, 2006. Accessed on 14/06/2017.

¹⁴¹ Arambam, Kapil, UFO sightings in Manipur. URL: <https://kapilarambam.blogspot.com/2012/09/ufo-sightings-in-manipur.html> ; Bhounik, Anirban. Deccan Herald, (15th January, 2005), Manipur Government wakes up to UFO threat. URL: <http://archive.deccanherald.com/Deccanherald/jan152005/n3.asp>

human practices that repeats the models provided by divine activities in a mythic time (Barth, C. 2013, p. 59-61). Eliade's conceives of primary classification between sacred and profane entities while considering the notion of men being in the world (ibid, p.60). While Eliade conceives of a primitive or archaic society to be closer to the sacred or consecrated objects, we can compare it with the religion and society of the Meiteis which have rich historical narratives that shows the origin of the cosmos and they being direct descendents of the Gods. The elemental phenomenon of a binary between the sacred and profane is very much evident as per the legends. The concept of connecting with the sacred through hairophenies was to be taken up as Eliade puts, through the understanding of "authentic meanings" of archaic mythology (ibid, P. 61). Connecting with the sacred past can be expressed in time and space through the concept of repetition and recovery of the valued object in the cosmos. Thus myths, symbols and rites serves as keepers of memories of the past hairophanies and which pass on the knowledge necessary to repeat the celestial models and re-found sacred time and space (ibid, p. 62). This as per Eliade can be done by religious men who can perceive the sacred and the restoration of the divine is done through the repetition of divine archetypes, mostly in the forms of well established rituals (ibid, P. 61). Here looking at the case of Meitei organizations working for reviving the ancient sites through hairophanies, often motivated by political motives, the eruptions and breakthroughs of sacred sites are often done through *Lai fao* or through myths and legends. *Lai Haraoba* serves as the divine archetype of sacred practice or the ritual to reclaim or glorify the sacred site of hairophany. Thus Eliade says, the reality is acquired solely through repetition or participation (Eliade , 2005, p. 34)¹⁴².

Unfortunately some efforts by the Poramlem Apunba and Meitei revivalists to bring to live hairophany in place, in few areas of Manipur became a matter of conflict between Meiteis and Pangals. This organization was involved in a structural intimidation of the Muslims during the early 90s by appealing to the Meitei masses through newspaper to not mix up with Muslims, not to sell land or rent out their residential premises and an ultimatum was

¹⁴² Barth, Christiane (2013) "In illo tempore, at the Center of the World": Mircea Eliade and Religious Studies" in Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung, Vol. 38, No. 3 (145) Space/Time Practices and the Production of Space and Time (2013), pp. 59-75

served on the Muslims traders and rickshawpullers¹⁴³. It was reported in 1992, that it tried to drive out the Muslims out of Manipur¹⁴⁴. There were bids to reclaim and sacralize Leima Ching, a small hillock in Thoubal District, which was encroached upon by the nearby Pangals who used the land for settlement and as a burial site. The site is claimed by the Meiteis as the sacred site of *Leima Taret* (Seven Goddess). Poramlen Apunba objected to the presence of the Pangals in the area in May 1992, and they not only tried to sacralize the area through a hairophenic ritual of Lai Haraoba but also tried to evict the Pangals away from the area.¹⁴⁵ This led to a charged situation taking a communal turn, which was however controlled in time. However the incident had already polarized the society to a large extent.

Another similar incident of an attempt to consecrate an area was that of Chingeiching¹⁴⁶. Porumlen Apunba was again involved in the case. Here the area, a hillock was claimed as the abode of Goddess Imoinu (Goddess of Wealth). The condition in this case was more serious as the rituals of consecration had been performed; foundation stone of a temple laid and even a temporary structure was constructed. However any possible untoward violence was averted through an amicable negotiation.

The third case of conflict between the two communities with causal factor relating to religious matter is the incident of Sati Khongnang. The incident happened at Mayang Imphal, where a banyan tree considered as a sacred tree (Sati Khongnang) by the Meiteis, were believed to have been intentionally put on fire by the Pangals so as to hurt the feelings of the Meiteis. There were rumors of the Pangals desecrating the holy tree, leading to a charged atmosphere. While no significant violence happened, various forms of rumor being spread had caused deep injury to the relationship between two communities.

These conflicts were succeeded by the 1993 May violence. However after this unfortunate and unprecedented incident, things have not much improved in the relations between the two communities. Different forms of conflicts and violence have continued, overtly and in subtle

¹⁴³ Syed, Feroja (2007). Religion, ethnicity and the state: Pangals in Manipur. M.Phil Dissertation, JNU, New Delhi. Pp.63

¹⁴⁴ Ahmed, Farzand. 31st May, 1993. Manipur Gore: Communal Riots Rouse in Manipur. Url : <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/naga-kuki-clash-communal-riots-rouse-temperatures-in-manipur/1/302296.html>. Website visited on 14/5/2017.

¹⁴⁵ Op-cited, Syed, Feroja (2007). Pp. 63.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. Pp. 63

forms. On 25th June, 2014, another case of conflict and violence based on overlapping claims over lands happened at Ikop Pat (Ikop Lake) inside Thoubal district. As per the coverage given in different newspapers in the following days and as per interview with few people who were involved personally in the feud, the incident happened because of antagonistic claims over an area of 130 paris (one pari is approximately equal to 2.5 acres) inside the wetland area known as Ikop Pat. The claim made by Uchiwa Khelokhong Awang Leikai Collective Co-operative Society Limited (UKALCFCO) is that an area of 350 paris of land has a legal ownership with them since 1981-1982 and they have been using it for farming purpose for the last 33 years, without any objection from any communities or parties. Whereas Meitei villagers of Hayel and Uchiwa, claimed that Muslim Villagers of Uchiwa Nastao and Khelakhong have encroached into the land considered by the Meiteis as the abode of Umang Lais (Gods), *Ikop Ningthou* and *Nongshaba*. Thus the violent confrontation of 25th May, 2014, where few villagers and the Officer in Charge of Mayang Imphal Police Station, Sachidananda Soibam (MPS in probation), who came in civil dress were injured, was another incident of conflict and violence borne out of an attempt to revive land that Meities claim to be associated with their religious beliefs and practice, however the land being under the legal occupation of the Muslims.

Another dimension to look into this conflict is the notion of the boundary that lies between legality under modern democratic state and the rationality of traditional religious beliefs and practice. On the other hand it is also important to note the dimension of the state's role in maintaining a balanced politico-economic condition, as an impartial arbiter for all its citizen in a pluralistic society, and the challenge it faces in maintaining a balanced equation of shared space for all citizens, not just in economic space, but also in socio-cultural and religious space. It is important here to remind the conceptual understanding under Heirophany where Mircea Eliade borrowed the concept of sacred and profane to explain the phenomena of men's seeking to free him from "the terrors of history"¹⁴⁷. Here Eliade mentions of a concept of men's seeking the sacred by abolishing the profane or 'unreal'. To a modern man, the sacred is equivalent to 'power' and 'reality' and it establishes men to his

¹⁴⁷ Eliade, Merce, (2005) *The myth of the eternal return: Cosmos and history*, trans. Willard R. Trask. Princeton et al.: Princeton University Press. Originally published as *Le mythe de l'éternel retour: archétypes et répétition* (Paris : Gallimard,(1949). P. 161

sacred history. Here we may mention of the context in the Meitei society where the revivalist movement mostly under the Sanamahi Movement¹⁴⁸ have taken the utmost task of first cleaning the equivalent of 'historic terror' in Brahmanical hegemony and the practice of purity and pollution, which in the modern parlance as well as with respect to the pre-colonial, pre-modern state's religious practice and social ecology that exist then, it stands incompatible with the changing nature of Manipuri Society. The effort is to revive indigenous cultural traits to its original forms, which have been diluted by influx of different external cultural and religious traits, and to derive legitimacy from the new form of social reality which is believed to provide more value to the Meitei Society.

However as mentioned above, the effort to seek freedom and derive legitimacy through a politico-religious system considered as more compatible to the traditional Meitei value system, often faces conflict with the social reality under a multi-religious, pluralistic society in a modern state. Often people tend to take extreme forms of dichotomization forming distinct enclaves between communities. It is here mentionable that the rise of various civil societies and politico-religious groups that champions the cause of assertion or dissent on particular issues is on a rise. The growth of civil societies through the emerging educated elites of Manipur has been given as a propeller of change, in a complex arena where they take up the agency of a third eye to fill up the vacuum created by the structural changes in the polity and society of Manipur.¹⁴⁹ Whereas the growth of these civil organizations is a sign of the rise of a new political consciousness among the masses, problem lies when their process to seek legitimacy and advocacy becomes an arena of conflict.

The issue of representation is another problem in a complex society like Manipur. Singh (2005, p. 204) contends that in the process of Meitei revivalist Movement or the Sanamahi movement, civil society organizations work in areas of identity by selecting particular and appropriate elements of identity such as language/script or dress or belief and practices or religious sites, from the sets of identity which constitute the total sum of identity. However Singh contends that problems crop up when the organizations invoke identity but ignore the context. Example may be given of a press note published by Huiyen Lanpao, on 26/05/2014,

¹⁴⁸ Op. Cit. Singh, Khuraijam Bijoykumar (2005), P. 191-228.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, P. 191-228

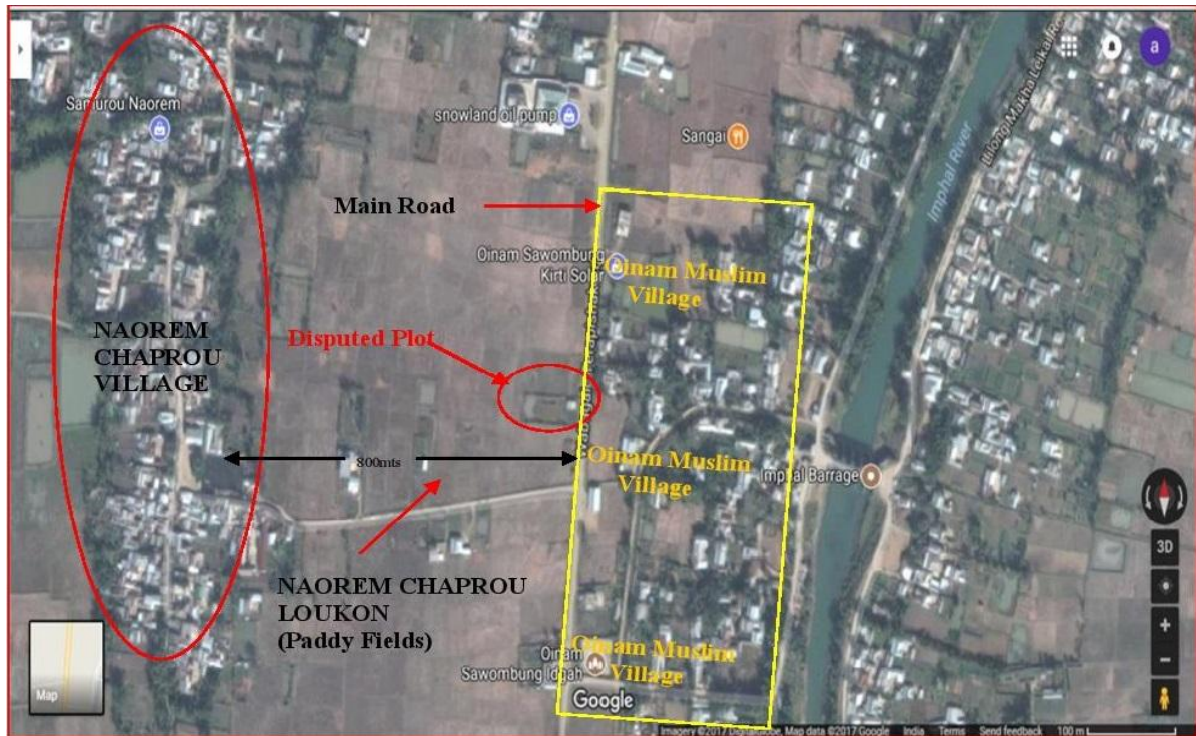
issued by Kangla Khunthokyai Apunba Luplen (KAKHAL), a civil society organization which claimed to represent the Meitei Community. While drawing attention of the state about the incident that happened on 25/05/2014, it also issued a series of threats along with a concocted version of the Pangal's history of settlement in Manipur. When the collective conscience of the people of Manipur at that crucial moment should ideally be looking for ways to maintain peace, this particular press-note acted as a catalyst not only to infuriate the masses but also to give a communal color to the incident. A series of condemnation came from various quarters of the society against this press note. While the claim of legitimacy and representation of any organization that sends out such sensitive notes are questionable, taking into consideration the collective conscience of the people of Manipur may not fall in line with their universalizing and encompassing views; it however causes serious injury to the already strained inter-community relationships in the state.

Conflicts related to religious sites are there in some other areas including Heingang Ching, which is considered as a sacred abode of Pakhangba and Laisna by the Meiteis. Similar cases of conflict happened at this site in 2014; however the issue was amicably resolved through representatives of both communities. In case of Hiyangthang Tarahei Konjil, Imphal West District, the site commonly known as Heibok Mahadeva Temple, which was also once referred by KAKHAL as *Singsat Singthafm, Nonggum Nonggabam* (Huiyen Lanpao, 27th May, 2014, Page 2), an interview with Md. Rajen of Hiyangthang Tarahei Konjil, former President of Mohammanan Social Youth Club, revealed that an expansionist move by the temple board disregarding the agency of the local villagers had sent an alarming situation to the Pangal villagers. He expressed that the registered area of Heibok Mahadeva Temple Complex is only 17 points as per revenue records. However over a period of time, there has been a series of expansionist activities from the Heibok Mahadeva Development Committee, in terms of the use of land, permanently as well as on a temporary basis. Incidents of symbolic marking of land margins using metal poles have sent out a notice of apprehension to the local villagers. As per Md. Rajen the area under operation by the Temple committee have found to be increased by 2 Pari (2 ½ acres) approximately. On 6/12/2010, the villagers and club members of Hiyangthang Tarahei Konjil along with the members of Heibok Mahadeva Development Organisation, in a meeting presided by the Gram Pradhan of the locality had resolved to mark out the area of the Temple Complex and to have a permanent

fencing of it. It was also resolved that the said area be recognized, respect and maintain by both sides in all times to come.

Conflicts and Violence Based on Hate and Intimidation

The second type of violence observed in the last few decades between the Meitei's and Pangals of Manipur is that based on hate and intimidation. In Oinam Sawombung, Naorem Lamkhai, Mayai Lambi, Imphal West District, a home constructed by a Muslim villager, Md. Abdullah (40), on his own land was attacked by a mob of 40-50 unidentified Meitei men from Samurou Naorem Chaprou Village on 22nd September, 2011, at 11.30 PM. As reported in the daily newspaper, Huiyen Lanpao (23rd, September, 2011), the mob threw pre-planned bowl of fire over the house, tried to force-enter from two directions, threatening the life of four men who were staying inside. As reported on the newspaper, as well as informed by Md. Adbullah in an interview, protests were held in the area and people blocked the road. A complaint was filed on 22/9/2011, on the basis of which an FIR was lodged at Wangoi Police Station against 40-50 unknown villagers of Naorem Chaprou, vide FIR no. 79(9)2011.WGLPS u/s 448/436/427/506/34-IPC. However three years after the incident happened, the complainer was reportedly informed that no clue was found against the complaint. Md. Abdullah informed that the incident had happened because he had moved forward against the intimidation of the Naorem villagers to not make any constructions towards the western side of Mayai Lambi. The Oinam Muslims were allegedly warned by the Meitei villagers whose village lies 800 meters west of the disputed site, that any Meitei from anywhere can come and construct house at the area, however no Muslims can make any settlement there. Md. Abdullah complains that it was a direct fringe into his right to live at his own land, just on the basis of him being a Muslim. Similar cases of intimidation reportedly happened at Hiyangthang Pallak village (a small Muslim Village in Imphal West District) as informed by the villagers and the former secretary of their HPYDC, Club Hiyangthang Palak Youth Development Club, of Hiyangthang Pallak Village, Md. Abdul Gaffar.



Pic: A Google image over which the disputed site at Oinam Sawombung, Imphal West have been identified.

Mob Violence and Lynching

The third form of violence which has of late happened with a clear trend is mob violence against the Muslims. The case of mob justice is not new in Manipur. However this seems to have formed into a behavioral trait in the collective psyche of the people, which has seemed to have mutated to other forms of conflictive behaviors. The newly evolved nature of mob violence in Manipur has increasingly taken lynching as the new form of social control. Lynching is a defined as a collective violence in which a group of individuals circumvent the law and punish individuals for real or imagined crimes (Alvarez & Bachman, 2008: 224). A particular case of mob violence and lynching of a man at Dimapur in Nagaland had made headlines on March 5, 2015. It sent out signal of the dawn of a new form of violence in Northeast India, that shows the formation of a peculiar collective behavior amongst the people and its violent manifestation. The whole region had become a subject of discussion, taking into account the evolving socio-political and demographic changes and the changing

collective behavior of people. Following this incident a series of incidents of mob lynching took place in Manipur in the most unprecedented way. On November 2, 2015, in a locality of Imphal East District, Kongba Makha Nandeibam Leikai, there was a case of a school head master, Md. Hasmat Ali lynched by a mob on the allegation of trying to steal a calf. On the same day a JAC (Joint Action Committee) against the lynching of Hasmat Ali was formed and they disapprove the charge being given to him. The house of one of the brothers was burnt down by the mob, following the allegation that he was involved in the killing (Gani, Abdul, 5th November, 2105, www.twocircles.net).

The most brutal form of mob lynching of young Muslim children happened on two different occasions in 2016. In both cases the Muslim youths have been alleged to have stolen motor bikes. On 25th March, 2016, six young school children of 9th class belonging to the Muslim community had been brutally lynched at a *Thabal Chongba*(traditional moonlight dance of the Meiteis during the days of Holi festival locally known as *Yaoshang*) site at Iramsiphai in Thoubal District. In less than a fortnight another incident of severe form of mob beating of Muslim boys happened at Mayang Imphal area of Imphal West District, in which 3 boys were brutally beaten up in an alleged case of bike lifting. Two boys out of the three died in the lynching and the third had survived with serious life threatening injuries. In the ensuing turn of events, Joint Action Committees (JAC) formed against the brutal lynching of these boys had called a state wise Bandh on April 12, 2016. In the wake of the charged situation clashes happened between the two communities which left seven houses gutted and more than 30 people injured. Allegedly in both the cases the response from the state was absent and the police was complicit in inaction.¹⁵⁰ Both cases have been known to have settled through the interventions of civil societies the government's stationing of police forces in the areas affected by the conflict. However these unprecedented forms of violence have caused much damaged to the inter-community relations between the Meiteis and Pangals. Similar cases of mob attacks have been reported to have increased in the recent years in Manipur, where Muslims have been target of communally incited mob fired up by

¹⁵⁰ Gaffar, Md. Abdul. April 21, 2016: Mob violence in Manipur: An aberration or the erosion of syncretism? Url: <https://sabrangindia.in/article/mob-violence-manipur-aberration-or-erosion-syncretism>, website visited on 8/6/2017

allegations of ‘stealing vehicles’ from the nearby localities by the majority Meitei community.¹⁵¹

A critical analysis of the Conflicts and Violence between Meiteis and Meitei-Pangals

The conflicts and violence between the Meiteis and Pangals are not just ethnic in nature, but has multiple dimensions. One clear understanding from the trajectory of conflicts and associated violence is the existence of close relations between the various perspectives that form the substances of this violence. While usually physical violence takes the focal point for someone to conceive and feel the occurrence of violent incidents, this concept can help us understand the most subtle form of conflict and violence and the process of their evolution with respect to different socio-political conditions.

Manipur is a stratified society based on class and caste classification, especially in the valley region. The society has for a long time manifested division among people based on relative deprivation on economic ground, by virtue of geographical locations, on the basis of historically privileged social positions and because of cultural and religious sanctions. Feudalism under kingship and Brahmanism following the advent of Hinduism were important breaks in dividing the society into hierarchies of people. The economic disparities between the hill and valley have been found to have a huge gap. There are disparities and deprivations between the different communities too. While there may be variety of factors for these disparities, more often than not it is blamed on poor economic performances, lackadaisical implementation; failure of land reforms, corruption, etc. However certain subtle forms of power imposed by actors in the society, in order to maintain hegemony, can be made out through the concept of symbolic power; the ‘subtle, disguised’, hegemonic power.

An example of the active operation of symbolic violence can be seen from the response felt by the society at large. In an already charged atmosphere, any act of incitement by certain actors would provide the necessary latent energy to explode into a violent condition. The legitimacy and power is derived by such groups, taking opportunity of the charged situation.

¹⁵¹ *ibid.* Gaffar, Md. Abdul. (2006)

Hence in such condition the act of instigation acts as a subtle power that imposes symbolic meanings to the social actors. In most cases agencies to pull the emotions of people is used by actors to a tool to disseminate symbolic power. This disseminates through the public and gets imbibed and internalized in both cognitive and bodily expressions (op. cit. 83). Thus individuals and collectives get oriented towards practices through this subtle, taken for granted power. Thus when KAKHAL released a press note whose contents amounts to heighten hatred feelings between the Meiteis and Pangals, they derived the legitimacy for the act in terms of their representation, from their assumed power and position as being in a dominant position. The subtle power disseminated through the act shows their capacity to impose symbolic meaning (symbolic power), their authority to do so (symbolic capital derived through the legitimacy they appropriated through the charged situation and their claim for representing the Meitei society) and the distorting effects caused to the Pangal people in terms of fear and more so to the communal harmony between the two communities (symbolic violence) (ibid, p. 84).

In the context of a communally charged conflict, the naturalized and misrecognized form of symbolic power imposed by actors in a hegemonic position easily gets disseminated into the public, which in turn acts as a tool of symbolic violence over a period of time. Similar examples of use of symbolic power and violence can be deciphered from the incidents of violent incidents and conflicts happened between the two communities and identified in the previous section. In case of the incident of Oinam Sawombung as expressed by the owner of the plot in conflict, Md. Abdullah, the direct intimidation and threat given to him and the Muslim community was a direct infringement to one's liberty of life and social mobility. The same is the case of Hiyangthang Pallak Village where the Muslims villagers had been warned to not expand settlement beyond a road. This can be seen as patterned incidents of symbolic power having both structure and agency being imposed on a community, in order to lease terror and fear among people. This symbolic power creates panic and fear over a period of time and takes the form of a 'subtle', 'disguised' form of power that appears as natural and self evident. Thus the fear gets 'naturalized' in the minds of people over a period of time (ibid, p. 89).

One common phenomena in all the incidents of conflicts and violence in the state as a whole is people's inclination towards lawlessness; the tacit, ingrained disposition of a taken for granted behaviour of taking law into their hands. In-fact we can see a trend in the society where people agitating for some cause increasingly get confuse between rationality and emotions, or to choose between own's agency of choice or be moved by the wave of collective mobilisation. More often than not people get inclined towards fraternal and kinship association than to be identified for a collective social health. Hence in this scenerio, any protests or agitation becomes a site of expression of a confused notion of legitimacy of getting lawlessnes. This schema of thought seemed to have passed on through the years, and over to the new generations.

However the danger lies when people take to dichotomization in the process of taking law in their hands. Hence in most of the protests, bands and strikes associated with the conflict between the Meiteis and Pangals, ususally active spots of agitation are found to happen in areas where interface between the communities are maximum. And more often than not destruction of properties and victims of violence happens to be of the opposite community. For example in the statewise Bandh called by the JAC against the firing of Lairou of Ikop Ningthou Yakabung Semgat Sagatpa Lup, it was reported in most of the state dailies, about burning down of vehicles of muslim passerby and targeting MLA Fajur Rahim of Wabagai Assembly Constituency. On the other hand in the Bandh called by JAC againg Mayang Imphal Lynching, there was a clash between the bandh supportes who were Pangals and those who oppsed the Bandh, who were Meiteis. In the scuffle, some houses and shops were torched by both the parties (Sanaleibak, 12/04/2016). Therefore, the real objective of calling the bandh or protest to either seek the attention of the concerned authorities of the state to bring justice; in turn becomes a moment to consolidate hatred feelings amongst the communities, and turn the situation to take a communal colour.

Another important way to understand the phenomena and to decipher a relationship between identity and violence is to look at the trend of conflicts and the form and substance of the violence. With respect to the relations of the Meiteis and the Pangals, the Pangals have been in a relatively poorer state in almost all social and economic indices. The findings of the Mandal Commission and Socio-economic survey of the Meitei Pangals have given a very

weak position of the Pangals with respect to other communities. However at a time when neo-liberal economy is making ways into Manipur, the apprehension of the people of state is to protect their identity and scarce resources from being denuded and also to strive get maximum share in the new economy.

Most internal conflicts between communities are based on conflicts over differences of power and resources. Under this competitive atmosphere, and more precisely after the violent incident of May 1993, the Pangal's strive for identity assertion and better recognition; can be considered as an attempt to enhance the relatively poor position of cultural, social, economic, symbolic and institutional capital. While the Pangals become more assertive about their identity, bringing changes in cultural forms and dispositions, an appearance of clear ethnic boundaries and for that matter the formation of enclaves becomes apparent. This new changes can be a cause of conflict with the Meitei community. The new identity consciousness and assertions by the Pangals is a cause of concern to the hegemonic position and legitimacy derived out of symbolic power by the Meiteis. Thus the reification of identity caused by the rise of ethnic consciousness and subsequent assertions becomes an element of the conflict.

Role of Rumour in the Violence

“A rumor is a belief that diffuses, usually rapidly, among members of a particular population. The belief is often unverified, and thus it can be factually wrong” (Allport and Postman, 1947, p. 502-17; Bhavnani, Findley and Kuklinski, 2009, p. 878). The impact of rumour in an ethnic violence is immense. If we retrospect a bit and analyze the various infamous and notorious riots of the past century, we can make out that most of the ethnic based riots had their ignition factor, in some way or the other, related to rumour. Ravi Bhavnani, Findley and Kuklinski give a statistical account of a review of primary and secondary accounts of rumours in India from 1947 till 2001, (Brass 1997; Engineer 1995; Horowitz 2001), that 27 of the 28 rumors identified were connected to violent riots¹⁵². Much of the rumuors are unverified, may be wrong or may be right. The role of rumour in spreading violent stimulus in contemporary times may be negligible except for a small time frame, because of the various mediums of communication through which one can easily

¹⁵² Ibid. Bhavnani, Findley and Kuklinski , 2009 . p. 3

verify the authenticity of the news in the air. Whereas advanced communication mediums like social media and mobile network can assist in speedy circulation of a rumour, however the same mediums and an array of news channels can also help to ascertain the authenticity of unverified news if one has been circulated by any random person. However the situation could have been different two decades back in Manipur when the violent incident of 1993 happened. Communication facilities were not effective or advanced at that time, as it was a pre-mobile telephony or social media period. The violence in Manipur was to a large extent similar to the 1943 Detroit riot, where rumour of white women raped and murdered by the blacks went viral (ibid, p. 876). Rumours “often lack verifiability when verification is most needed: prior, to a decision to initiate violent action against another group. Lacking evidence challenging a rumor's truth or accuracy, group members can easily accept it. Second, rumor initiators play on already-high levels of intergroup animosity to evoke strong emotions” (Shibutani, 1966). One clear thing that can be pointed out from the 1993 violence of Manipur is that people could not have thought of verification of the swift rumour circulated in the air. Some possible reasons can be considered for this. The society of Manipur being of a small organic kind, a person gets to know what happened next door easily. People are closely related and bonded strongly. Any news of a women being hurt could be someone known, or someone known to a friend or to a relative, or else someone whose family lineage could be related from one to another. Moreover in a society where the position of women is highly revered, the news of rape of young women by people from another community would have certainly not given any person a consideration for a rational thought and action.

Bhavnani, Findley, and Kuklinski provide the mechanism of violence promoting rumours. When rumour spreads it goes among the ethnic members in the form of a belief that heightens emotions, instigates panic, intensifies distrust, and justifies brutality. Word-of-mouth communication helps fast spreading of rumour, which can be intensified if groups are formed.¹⁵³ This is a condition that often proceeds in a riot. But, in the case of Manipur, the enormous impact of the rumour was in fact because of the time and situation where the rumour broke out, the economic condition of the Muslims at that time and certain other

¹⁵³ Ravi Bhavnani, Michael G. Findley and James H. Kuklinski, (2009). Rumor dynamics in ethnic violence pp. 4

factors. Majority of Muslims in Manipur as per 1991 census had a fairly bad socio-economic condition. Other than the few who were in proper government jobs, most were engaged in either agricultural activities in village areas or many of them indulge in petty business in urban areas, to make a living. People had to go to Imphal and come back every day through the arterial roads that radiates out of the capital. And except of few villages in Imphal East, most of the Muslim localities are in far flung areas of Imphal West district, Imphal East District, Thoubal district, Bishenpur and Churachandpur district. The fact that the rumour was injected into the crowd of Imphal during the peak time of afternoon business hour¹⁵⁴, the thousands of Muslims who were indulged in petty business and those who were working in offices in and around Imphal almost felt victim of the wild rumour. Most of the victims were either killed or go injured on their way back to their homes when they were intercepted by violent mobs. The mindset of a common Manipuri of feeling safe only when they reach home, the impact of the unprecedented rumour forcing people to rush out of Imphal, and the complete absence of Muslim villages for fair long distances along the arterial roads, amounts to the severity of the calamity.

However, we can look at the critical aspect of the diffusion of rumour. The basic cognitive question that we can ask is, if only the diffusion of certain volatile catalyst into the masses through a rumour of Meitei girls being raped by Muslims was enough for the masses to react to that potential? If not, what can be the factors that have helped to produce such a huge collective mobilisation and a common conscience among the Meiteis in such a short time? Was it a sporadic and episodic action or a common mob-mentality-induced action? If the answers are not affirmative, what all roles could have contributed to the unprecedented outpour of violent behavior of the Meiteis against the Pangals? These are the areas worth enquiring. However going by the history of relations between the two communities, and the recent developments of conflicts at certain locations of Imphal and Thoubal Districts, it can be considered that the sudden and swift reaction to the rumour was because of the deeply lodged prejudice and hate against the Muslim community, which was expressed at an appropriate time in a cathartic manner.

¹⁵⁴ Op. cit. Singh, S. Mangi. P. 217.

Prejudice and Stereotypes: The different shades of Misrecognition

Nancy Fraser opines that many of the world's social conflicts are driven by claims for the recognition of differences (2000, p. 1-7). In the newly developed scenario of ethnic hostility in Manipur, one major process of inducing hatred between communities is that of 'misrecognition'. Fraser contends that "misrecognition is neither a psychic deformation nor a free standing cultural harm but an institutionalized relation of social subordination. To be misrecognized, accordingly is not simply to be thought ill of, looked down upon or devalued in other's attitudes, beliefs or representations. It is rather to be denied the status of full partner of social interaction, as a consequence of institutionalized patterns of cultural value that constitute one as comparatively unworthy of respect or esteem" (ibid, 4/7). In this case the interaction among the communities will show a pattern of cultural value that constitutes some actors as superior and others as inferior and unworthy of participation, like thinking to be neighbor with people of a particular community as dangerous, ominous or a matter of discomfort to one's everyday life. This results in curbing the liberty of participation of a group in social mobility, respectful interaction and integration to the society. The awakening of the Pangals for identity consciousness and to push aggressively for a respectful recognition and redistribution for proportionate participation in the society comes only after the 1993, May incident. Most of the changes brought about hence, were because of an agency derived from amongst the community in terms of political awakening and the drive to bring the community at par with other historically privileged groups. In this scenario, despite acknowledging the role of the establishment in bringing valuable changes, it still needs to be researched upon if there was a structural and institutionalized pattern of misrecognition in history. However certain overt signs of inappropriate classifications are observed in the Pangal-Meitei relationships, which show prejudiced notions of misrecognition in the form of stereotypes.

Cognitive approach to the study of ethnic relations in general and ethnic violence in particular has given preference to existentialist mode of analysis, where at micro-interactive level, problems associated with unofficial, informal, everyday classification and categorization practices employed by ordinary people have been discussed. As given by

Brubaker, Loveman and Stamatov (2004), social identification and labeling of one ethnic group or community by another community in a particular form, such as stereotypes could ultimately lead to prejudiced mental dispositions and differential treatments, (op.cit.p. 32). The role of stereotype in-fact can play a decisive factor in the run up to the violence. The Pangals have a slightly different dialect of speaking their (meiteilon), their mother tongue. However this is being mocked in inappropriate ways which manifest sarcasm, often hatred.

In certain parts of Muslim villages a child is often called lovingly or casually by the word '*naha*', a Manipuri word, which literally means a small child. Despite the fact that this word is used by both the Muslims as well as the Meiteis, it has become a highly stereotyped word to indicate a Pangal identity, or to express angst or to jeer a Muslim child or a youth, by the Meiteis. Different versions of the word, *naha-macha*, *nahajaobi*, *naha-chouba*, etc. are being used with a tone (pronunciation) which the Muslims seldom use; pronouncing a sense of sarcasm, jeer and mockery to the target subjects in everyday social interactions. The use of these words implicitly conveys meanings of a taken for granted notion of uncouth, lack of grace and refinement to the Pangals etc. Similar usage of stereotype such as 'hao' against the hill tribes of Manipur, chinkis against the people of north east by people in other parts of India, Paki against the people of South Asia in England convey deep sense of prejudice and hatred feelings to the target people. This encourages hatred feeling against the Meitei community. There are many other words like *ejou*, *echou*, *dachou*, *Sarina*, *Fatima* etc. out of which most of them are used with an extra added flavor of sarcasm. These stereotypes have been used in the folk stories, radio-drama, digital films, and *sumang lila*¹⁵⁵, manifesting a deep rootedness of hatred and prejudice.

There are many other examples of established stereotypes which are used against the Muslims. The idea that Muslims are stingy, which are used as a popular joke is another example. The majority community perhaps fails to acknowledge the socio-economic condition of the Muslims, where majority of them are at the lowest rung of social hierarchy. Ignoring the lack of purchasing and spending capacity enforced by the weak economic condition, the Muslims have always been victims of a prejudiced, stereotyped notion of

¹⁵⁵ Sumang Lila- a popular Manipur folk plays which are often played on a brightly lit elevated stage during night time or during day time. This is an all men play where female characters are also played by male artists.

stinginess. Manifestation of this notion in popular folk culture, *ipom*¹⁵⁶ is another stark example of stereotyped narratives against the Muslims.

Another example of stereotype is branding the Muslims as thieves¹⁵⁷. The recent incidents of violence against the Muslim community mentioned above, where six school children were allegedly beaten up brutally in one incident and another in another incident where two school students were lynched to death and another critically injured, happened because of alleged attempt to lift bikes. Depiction of Muslims as rickshaw pullers even by the mainstream Media is another form of misrecognition in Manipur. These prejudiced notions of social categorization and stereotypes only add to widen the ethnic gap between the two communities. As per Richard Jenkins, the process of labeling in a stereotypic fashion becomes internalized over a period of time promoting the social categorization of ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Jenkins, 1997, p. 60).

Violent Conflict and Structural Reorganization in the Muslim (Pangal) Society

The last few decades, a wind of social changes have taken place in the Meitei-Pangal society of Manipur. Religious awakening in other parts of India during the 20th century had its impact in Manipur too. People from this community had acquired religious knowledge from other parts of India and introduced it in Manipur.¹⁵⁸ This brought tremendous changes in the socio-religious life of the Pangals which is commonly referred to as Islamization, in spite of the diversity of interpretations of this term. Yogendra Singh¹⁵⁹ compared islamization to sanskritization, in the Little tradition of Hinduism, taking cue of the social framework existent in other parts of India and because of the nature of change brought about by this change. However he linked the islamization in contemporary world “to a possible feeling of alienation from the Hindu tradition generated by the changing, political, cultural and economic conditions.” These changes brought numerous religious and cultural institutions in the Pangal society from time to time. The objectives of these instructions almost remains same, however the context of origin differs.

¹⁵⁶ Ipom – Ipom is a popular Manipui Folk culture of narration of jokes by trained artists.

¹⁵⁷ Gaffar: *Mob Violence in Manipur: An Aberration or an Erosion of Syncreticism*. (2016)

¹⁵⁸ Op.cit. Syed, Feroja. P. 49

¹⁵⁹ Singh, Yogendra, 1999 (reprint), *Modernization of Indian tradition*. New Delhi: Rawat Publications. P. 73; (Op. cit.) Ahmed, Shakil, 2011. P. 112- 113.

While the religious institutions for Islamic education is said to have started in the first decade of the 20th century, (Ahmed, 2011, p. 115), the rise of some other social reformatory organizations, which work in a variety of social-religious and cultural spheres are worth mentioning. Muhammad Muheiyuddin Mazahiri, the co-ordinator and finance-in-charge of Anjuman-Islah-e-Muasharah, the most well known social reformation organization of its type in present Pangal society, mentioned about reason of origin of these types of organization by connecting to a decay in ‘ideal’ form of life defined by religion, to the need to ‘self-correct’ the monumental rise of anti-social elements inside the Pangal community. Anjuman(as known in short), was incepted in the February, 2011, comprising only *ulama* as its members. Initially covered across 111 *mohallas*, the organization now has become a pan-Manipur organization. The organization also runs an active rehabilitation center with a capacity of 80 people that works throughout the year. Muheiyuddin mentioned that many such organizations which were active in the past had stopped functioning. These include ICRA which was founded in 1988 at Imphal, Action Committee, Dau-tul Haque etc. While the major function of Anjuman remains to be stop all known kinds of anti-social elements which are ‘traditionally and religiously’ considered as perilous to the society, such as drug menace, thief, small and violent crimes etc. However as mentioned by him, the monumental rise of this kind of institutions and the rise of public acceptance of their activities had increased post 1993 May riot. On being asked the reason, he replied that “when all doors are closed, when social mobility appears to have curbed, when security of life and livelihood is threatened, when our own society has so many youths increasingly being pulled towards morally corrupt behaviors; the only way to find peace is to clean retrospect and clean ourselves”.

Other explicit changes and restructuring in social and cultural life have also become part of the new facets that signifies the self identification process of the Pangals. While modernity brings a sea of change among the Meitei society, relatively the Muslim society still remains different to a certain extent in terms of the reach of its impact. To a large extent there has been a radical change of the dress code among the Muslim ladies and girls through the use of costumes like *hijab*¹⁶⁰, *nakaf*¹⁶¹ and other ceremonial costumes and other dresses of day to

¹⁶⁰ Hijab- It is a modernized form of headscarf used by Muslim ladies to cover their head in tune to the Islamic tradition of maintaining purdah system.

day use. Most of these dresses are of traditions elsewhere. This phenomenon is perhaps looked upon by the members of the majority community as negative attitude towards local culture and longing for cultures of foreign origin. In common terminology, this move has increasingly being termed as *Arabisation*. Use of salwar kameez by school going girls, using headscarves by girls and abandoning the use of local *potloi*¹⁶² during marriage ceremony as drifting away from local culture on the one hand and breakdown of syncretic culture on the other hand. Though the Muslim society has their own explanation based on religious factors, the trend is akin to self- categorization or self-Otherisation.¹⁶³ This phenomenon as a whole can be seen as a perspective to make sense of the strong tendency of drifting apart of social cohesion between the two communities.

Mention may also be made of other tendencies of structural reorganization inside the Muslim (Pangal) community of late. The formation of clan systems in the form of *sagei* started right after the settlement of Meitei Pangals (Muslims) in Manipur in 1606 A.D., during the reign of the Manipur King Khagemba.¹⁶⁴ In the early period of settlement, the Pangals, which follows the Hanafi School of jurisprudence of Islam, were a homogenous community. Historical texts give that the *sagei*¹⁶⁵ system of classification of the community was not based on religious or cultural notions. However they were classified as per the services provided to the state, by the Muslim armies who were allowed to settle in Manipur. Under this system, unlike the caste system, they had the freedom to choose; a system worked out under the feudal like structural framework (Ahmed, Shakil Mohd, 2009).

In the last few decades the Muslim writers have started referring to division of Manipuri Muslims like that of the mainstream Muslims (Ipham, Muhammad Ali Janab Khan, 1972). Contemporary Muslim writers have accorded themselves to the four subgroups of Ashraf Muslims existed elsewhere, i.e, *Syed, Sheikh, Mughal* and *Pathan*, those who trace their origins to lands like Arabia, Persia, Turkistan, Afghanistan etc. This is being seen as attempts to acquire social mobility as described by Mohammed Shakil in his essay, *Social*

¹⁶¹ Nakaf- A long, loose, full body Islamic dress worn by ladies which covers from head to teo.

¹⁶² Potloi- a traditional gown used by Manipuri ladies for Manipuri dance as well as bridal costume

¹⁶³ Yeh,Lah and Der, Theresa (2010). 'From Self-Otherization to Self-Solidification: a Discursive Analysis of People's Visions of Peace in Taiwan'. *International Journal of Peace Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Autumn/Winter 2010), pp. 59-88

¹⁶⁴ Op.-cit.(Ahmed). 2011. P-84-86

¹⁶⁵ Sagei- it is an exogamous classification system where the whole Pangal society is classified.

*Stratification: Ashrafisation in Manipur.*¹⁶⁶ Shakil Ahmed has given that it is the attempt to acquire social mobility among the Muslims (Pangals) that acts as the main reason behind the change. Ashrafisation as a phenomenon has been described as a new wave of acquiring status mobility through lateral and forged alliances of the *Sageis*. This process is seen as a manifestation of search for status and honour. Under this process, a change in the social fabric of the community has taken place where *sagei*-centric alliance formation has given a big push to the creation of stratified social structure, causing serious split in relation among the *sageis*. Many of the *sageis* are forged into alliances to become part of a common group with *Syed, Sheikh, Mughal or Pathan*, the sub groups that form the Ashraf Muslims. However Ahmed maintains that this process mainly works at the individual level.

Taking into account the process of Ashrafisation among the Muslims of Manipur, we can take a look at the evolutionary approaches of social changes given by G.S. Ghurye: 1945, B.S. Guha: 1937; Yogendra Singh: 1980 (Quoted in Singh, 1980). Through this approach, a comparative analysis can be made to describe the construction of new forms of social mobility among the Muslims in Manipur. This theoretical model of social change given by Yogendra Singh associates major categories of thought that comprises the Indian tradition with 'hierarchy', 'holism', 'continuity' and 'transcendence'. Singh associated social change with cultural change from two distinct tangents. One way is to look from a substantive change of structures of culture and its relationship with social institutions. The other is through the process of change in culture by the forces of globalization. However looking from a theoretical perspective, the conceptual formulation of social change as per Singh is classified into the following types: (1) Evolutionary approaches; (2) Cultural approaches: Sanskritization-westernization; Little and Great Tradition, and Multiple Traditions; (3) Structural approaches; Differentiation and Mobility Analysis and Dialectical –Historical approaches.

Looking from a culturalist approach, we can compare sanskritization and Ashrafisation. 'Sanskritization' represents actual or aspired for cultural mobility within the framework of the established 'Great Tradition' and stratification of a caste system. Srinivas defines sanskritization as a process by which low caste or tribe or group emulates and customs,

¹⁶⁶ Op.cit, Ahmed. 2009.

rituals, beliefs, ideology and style of life of a high caste particularly the “twice born” caste. Taking recourse on the concept of Ashrafisation where the Meitei Pangals of Manipur have emulated the hierarchical structure of the mainstream Muslims in other parts of India, the concept of Srinivas is highly suited to explain the phenomena. However it needs to be explained as to why the Muslims of Manipur choose to emulate the Ashraf Muslims? This will give us another avenue to explain the conditions of mobility in the process. Sanskritization as a process can also be analyzed in the context of the nature of socio-economic deprivations experienced by various groups in the social structure (Gould, H, 1968, p. 945, 50; Singh, 1980). It is here given that the urge to sanskritize may be a disguise attempt to raise the social status mobility ritually as a result of a closure of economic means for status mobility or as a consequence of it. From the point of view of evolutionary theory, the Muslims’ attempt to gain social mobility is explained by tracing their origin and attempting to develop a link with the Muslim higher caste, the Ashrafs.

From these developments, the change taking place in the Muslim society can help us interpret and make a co-relation with the context of the conflicts. As given above, the attempt to attain social mobility, on the one hand takes a course of the larger tradition happening outside Manipur, i.e. those of the mainstream Indian Muslims, whereas on the other hand it may be also considered as a practice drifting away from the *sagei* system introduced by King Khagemba to the Pangals. However, this change implicitly brings the Muslim society closer to the mainland Muslims which can be considered as another case of creating boundary between the two communities. The notion of the Pangals increasingly identified with cultural traits of the Muslims elsewhere is one main reason of the growing animosity.

Conclusion

The thesis basically problematizes identity, the Pangal's (the Manipuri Muslims) identity and that of the Meitei identity, in relation to the various social processes and developments that have happened in the state of Manipur, particularly with the rising trend of violence happening between these two communities. By enquiring into the different variables at various locations in history and finding a relationship with the social processes in the present world, this work has tried to decipher layers of meaning out of the ongoing processes of conflict and violence happening in Manipur and particularly between the two communities under study. The thesis discusses in detail, the historical conditions of the formation of the Pangal identity. By mapping the political condition of Manipur during the early period of settlement of the Pangals, through appropriate historical facts and data, this study traces the significance of the settlement using a constructive model of deciphering meanings and interpretation. The inference is made by analyzing and interpretation of the sociological variable of reciprocity in relationships; by taking into account each party expected from other, received and maintained during and after the incident of immigration in 1606 A.D. While giving an emphasis on the nature of symbiotic associations and reciprocal relationship maintained between the two communities, which was firmly set by developing a strong kinship relationship, this study explains that rather than looking at the incident of immigration and settlement of the Muslims as 'an incident in history' that happened as an outcome of just another war or as a product of administrative arrangement of the then King Khangemba; it can rather be regarded as one of the most significant decision of the King in the history of Manipur, in forming a strong sovereign entity, provided the political condition in 1606 A.D and the days after. This premise further helped in explaining the primordial location of the Pangal identity and the relations between inter-community conflicts.

The systematic study of the variables of conflict, identity and violence helps to make an inference that the conflict between the Meitei Pangals and the Meiteis is of recent origin. Though the material condition because of which a conflictive relation emerged might have a long history, accumulated in the ethos and conscience of the people of Manipur, influenced by the various forces of religious and cultural invasion and effects of globalization, the real product of the conflict gets manifested only in the last quarter of the 20th century. The

Communal riot of May 1993 was a turning point that brought significant changes in the cultural and political landscape of the area.

Based on a firm epistemological assumption of a strong relationship between identity and violence; the study harps for an explanation through a detail enquiry of the process of identity formation, through dialectical transactions of identification and classification. Based on this premise the inquiry into these processes exhibits certain trends of identification brought by structural changes in the Pangal community and different socio-political and cultural changes in the Meitei society. Islamization is one such process because of which the syncretistic cultural traits have withered, thereby creating an area of forming schemas of identification of the Pangals. However certain areas still remain where the concept of self identification staggers in want of proper explanation, when certain traits among the Pangals still continue to appear as a product of symbolic power relations, rendering them to emulate the traits of Meiteis as if it is superior. Emulation of Meitei way of speaking is one appropriate example of emic misrecognition among the Pangals. Whereas misrecognition of the Pangals through etic process of classification, using stereotypes in extreme forms, by referring to certain behavioral traits such as mocking at the peculiar way of speaking *Maitelon* by the Pangals, through sarcastic, stereotypic words, conveying message of sarcasm, hate and mockery, is another parallel way of otherisation process active in the society. Based on the meanings derived from the understandings of classification and identification using the cognitive approach of analysis, it can be contended that the uses of stereotype is one major agency of fomenting hate between the two communities, thereby serving as active agencies in structuring peculiar patterns of interaction among different ethnic groups or subgroups, inducing the persistence of differences.

One main argument made in this thesis is that, after the unprecedented violent incident of May 1993, the society has not reverted back to a peaceful state. Rather the hatred feelings between the two communities seemed to have increased over a period of time. This study has extracted three patterns of conflicts and violence between the two communities that appears to be happening after 1993 incident. Most studies of the Pangal identity formation have banked on a recent emergence of a new consciousness among the Pangals in terms of political and social development, brought about by a wave of changes taking place in the

state, and the relative weakness felt by the community vis-à-vis the changes and growth happening among the other communities. The relative deprivation model has been used by many civil society organizations, educated elite Pangals and Political leaders (op.cit. Feroja, Syed, 2007, p. 47), to assert for a unique Pangal identity, as well as to demand for reservation in Job and education in the state. This assertion had borne fruit with the allocation of 2.5 % of the 17% OBC quota for the Meitei-Pangals under the OBC category (Quota inside quota) in the subsequent years. However this study gives an argument that with increasing assertions from the Pangals not just in political spheres but also by identifying oneself with new locales of religious and cultural traits, and the increasing dimensions of revivalist movements among the Meitei society, have induced the two communities to become further apart because of consolidation of in-group identity, leading to objectification of boundaries and reification of one's identity. It has been pointed out that the politics of recognition increasingly adopted by the Meitei revivalists, following the identity model has only induced people to take extreme forms of dichotomization, forming distinct enclaves between communities. The incidents of the growth of organization who claims to represent the whole Meitei Society, giving statements of intimidations and indulging in politics of hatred only add to the cause more strain in the relationship between the two communities.

The Meitei-Pangal's move of inclining towards islamization after the violent incident of 1993 May, can be considered as a moment of relapse and a manifestation of rejection of the increasing Meitei hegemony and hatred campaigns against the community. The increasing trust deficit between the two communities and sense of insecurity felt amongst the Pangals might have prompted to take the path of religion seeking stronger bonding with the supernatural. This can be considered as an isolationist behavioural disposition from the Pangals, naturally developed when people seek solace and meanings, self purification and acknowledgement of self by being identified with their religion.

After looking at the second trend of conflict and violence using force intimidation and hate, it can be made out from the interviews of people impacted by such intimidations that this has curbed their scope of mobility and expansion. This has not only brought fear psychosis among the minds of people but also helped in maintaining distinct enclaves in the ethnic

boundary relations between the two communities. The basic impact factor seen as an outcome of this type of symbolic imposition of power over 'others' only induces a subtle, unseen and dominating power dynamics active in the relationships between the communities. The study could locate that this type of symbolic violence has blocked the social mobility and participation of people in everyday social spaces.

Looking at the trend of violence which has evolved in the last few years, the whole Manipuri society seemed to have developed a behavioral trait of taking law in their hands, by increasingly resorting to mob justice. An observation into the trend of the spate of mob lynching reveals that the maximum number of victims happens to be Muslims, with majority of them becoming victims on charges of being thieves. This condition seems to have evolved into a clear case of hate crimes produced by a prejudiced conception of another community persistent in amongst a community. While the theoretical explanation on Suri-Dizi crisis in Ethiopia by Jon Abbink tells us of the evolution of human nature with respect to aggressive behavior, brought by drastic socio-political and technological changes in society; it also tells us of the changes brought in terms of the threat to group fitness, curtails balance reciprocity between the communities and impose hierarchy and dominance in social relations in the long run. This gives an apt similarity with the case of the crisis between the Meitei and Pangal communities.

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